

GORDON SMITH '90

a
STAR
TREK
fanzine

IDIC

LOG

6

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An IDIC publication

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Printing of Masters - Janet Quarton
Printing - Urban Print
Distracting - Shona & Cindy

IDIC Log 6 is put out by IDIC and is available from -

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6 Craigmill Cottages
Strathmartine
by Dundee
Scotland

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Editorial

Hello, and welcome to this issue of IDIC LOG.

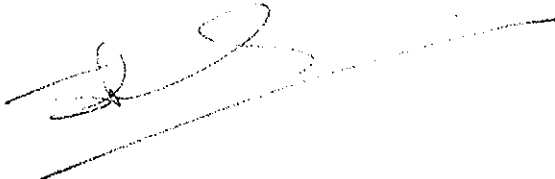
We're getting in a lot of submissions these days, both for IDIC LOG and for our various Scotpress zines. New writers are appearing and the future of our zines looks good.

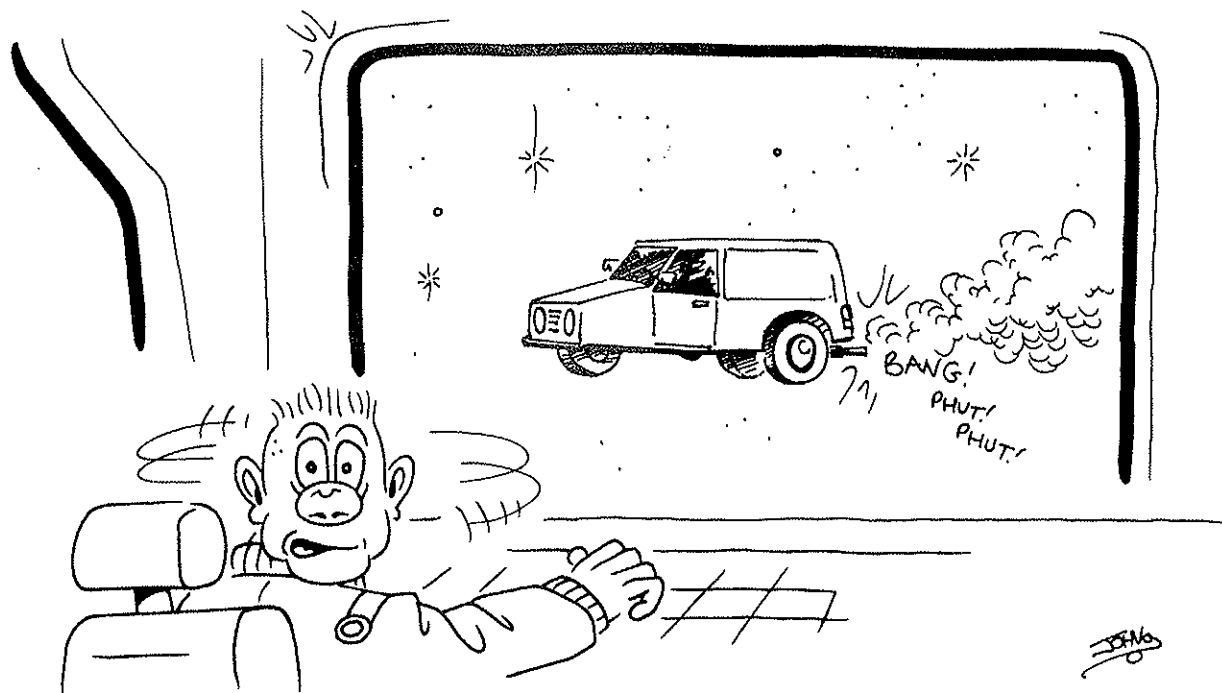
The main reason for having an editorial in this zine is to give a short explanation for my story, Perfectly Logical.

Many years ago - fifteen, at least - I wrote a story called Totally Illogical. It was originally printed by Alnitah, and we reprinted it in Home to Roost 2. In it, Star Trek was merely the dream of a very juvenile, totally Vulcan Spock. When the Vulcan adults found out about the dreams and that Spock considered the people in them to be his friends, a Healer used his telepathic ability to remove the memory of them from his mind - because friendship and love were a sign of abnormal emotional development; they were totally illogical.

I always felt that it was a chilling little indictment of Vulcan and Vulcan mores, and for fifteen years I've felt sorry for that Spock. Then while I was typing the story out for Home to Roost, a sequel occurred to me, and Perfectly Logical is the result. It is, of course, an alternate universe story, for in that universe, when Spock was a child, Vulcan did not have space flight and knew nothing of other races.

For anyone who has not read Totally Illogical, we do (spring 1991) have a few photocopies of Home to Roost 2.

A handwritten signature, likely of the author, is written in dark ink. It consists of a stylized, cursive name followed by a long, horizontal flourish line.



**IT'S ONE OF OURS CAPTAIN -
IT'S THE RELIANT!!**



**I'M REALLY NOT SURE THAT
RED IS MY COLOUR....**

TRUST RESTORED

by

Helen Cakebread

First Officer Spock recording, Stardate 5436.9

An unknown ship attacked us before our shields were on full power. Fifteen of the crew were injured and eighteen killed; one of these is our Captain, George Samuel Kirk. We are headed for Starbase 11 for needed repairs and to take on crew replacements; I have also been informed that the new Captain will be joining us there.

Commander Spock, personal log.

We are now only twenty-four hours and forty minutes away from the Starbase. The crew will be glad of a rest. We are all wondering who the next Captain will be, and hoping he is better than the last one. I am frankly surprised that Captain Kirk has lasted for the past two years; he was not a leader the crew respected, and I had no trust in him.

He tried to force friendship onto me, but I did not want it. He used people. Not once did I hear him praise his crew. This would not have mattered to Vulcans, but although I do not fully understand Humans, I do realise that a small word of praise makes them work better. As First Officer I heard a lot of grumbling.

I have heard he has a younger brother who has recently been promoted to Captain. For the ship's sake I hope we do not get him - he will surely want to prove himself.

The repairs had been done and the new crew had settled in; one of these was a new helmsman, Lieutenant Sulu. Although they were only in routine orbit of the Starbase, he had already shown that he was fully competent, and Spock was satisfied that in Sulu they had gained an excellent crewman.

Now Spock stood rigid, McCoy behind him, waiting for the new Captain to arrive. He knew that the crew were waiting with a resigned hopelessness since they were told who it was to be. For himself, he had only a grim determination that he must do his duty and see to it that the Captain was obeyed.

Captain James T. Kirk appeared in the transporter room in front of Spock. "Permission to come aboard," he said.

"Permission granted," Spock said as the Captain stepped down from the pad. Spock moved forward. "Commander Spock, First Officer." He was studying the newcomer. James Kirk had the same build as his brother, but his hair was a lighter shade of brown and he had hazel eyes which shone as he tried to keep from smiling

excitedly. He nodded acknowledgement of the introduction, and then nodded again as Spock continued, "This is Chief Medical Officer McCoy. If you will come this way, I will show you the ship." He stood back to let the Captain precede him.

Some time later, the Captain sat in his chair on the bridge. They had cleared the Starbase and were heading for Kara II. Kirk turned to Spock.

"Mr. Spock - please sound red alert."

Spock's eyebrow went up, but he did as ordered.

RED ALERT... RED ALERT... RED ALERT... went through the ship. It was fully five minutes before Uhura turned to Kirk to announce that the last emergency station was manned.

Spock glanced at the Captain, not really surprised to see that he looked angry. "Mr. Spock, cancel red alert." As the klaxon ceased, he pressed down two buttons on the comlink on his chair.

"Attention all hands. This is the Captain speaking. If this had been a genuine emergency and not a drill, we would all be dead. I am surprised that anyone lived through any attacks on this ship! Your response time is what I might expect from first year cadets - but not from the crew of a Starship. Red alert drills will continue at irregular intervals until I am satisfied that the crew is on top form. Captain out.

"Mr. Spock - you have the con. If I am needed, I will be in my quarters."

Kirk knew he would get no medals from the crew for the drills, but he had no intention of being killed through sloppiness now that he had got what he wanted - a Starship. Though it was amazing how quickly the drills got better - there was far less unnecessary chatter, and the crew was jumping to it.

By now he also knew, however, that he would have more of an uphill battle than he had expected when he heard he was to take over the ship that had been his brother's. He had read a few extracts from his brother's log, and what he saw had shocked him.

One entry said, *I will show them all! My father said I would never make a Captain - well, I have got a Starship - and even luckier, I have a Vulcan First Officer. Vulcans love work! Let him do it all - as Captain I will get all the praise for having a well run ship. My younger brother Jimmy wants to be a Captain too, but it will take him a long time - he does not know how to use people.*

But it was a later entry that really upset Kirk. *How was I to know the planet was a swamp? We beamed down four crew and heard no word from them. Mr. Spock said he had a life reading and wanted to go down in a shuttle to check. For myself, I thought it was a waste of time, but I let him go. I called him back after he had searched for two hours. I said we would come back after we had dropped the drugs off at Lorva III. This seemed to satisfy the Vulcan. Of course, I have no intention of returning.*

Kirk leaned back in his chair. He felt tired. No wonder the crew's performance was poor. No wonder they hated the name of Kirk! He only hoped that he could do a better job, and that in time they would come to trust him. The door buzzed; Kirk called, "Enter."

Dr. McCoy came rushing in. "Who ordered this? Because I don't want one! And if I did, I would pick my own!"

Kirk stood. "What are you talking about?" he asked.

"Someone has ordered me a head nurse!"

"That's right," Kirk replied. "I did."

McCoy just gaped, completely taken aback, then asked, "But why?"

"Because you need one. You can't be everywhere, and the nurses you already have aren't experienced enough to do the job and they know it. You will find Christine Chapel a very good and capable nurse, with experience in dealing with most aliens." He grinned. "Better start getting used to the idea."

McCoy scowled, but merely said, "Yes, sir," before he turned and left.

Kirk grinned. He was sure the Doctor would come around to the idea when he met her. He had first encountered her when he was in hospital with a virus and they had become good friends; she was like the sister he never had. He had promised her, "When I am a Captain you can come and work on my ship. I'll show you the stars." She had just smiled, but she jumped at his offer when it arrived.

The intercom buzzed. "Spock to Captain Kirk."

"Kirk here."

"The USS Yorktown is hailing us," said Spock.

"I'll be right up."

Kirk arrived on the bridge as the face of the Yorktown's Captain appeared on the viewscreen. "Robert Shaw of the USS Yorktown calling Enterprise."

"James T. Kirk here. Hello, Bob. What can I do for you?"

"I've brought you your new nurse - she's beaming over now."

Kirk nodded and punched the intercom on the arm of his chair. "Transporter room."

"Transporter room here. Nurse Chapel has beamed aboard."

Kirk closed the circuit. "Thanks, Bob. Anything we can do for you?"

"No, we're fine thanks. Be careful, Jim. Yorktown out."

"The Yorktown is moving off," Sulu reported.

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu. Put us back on course," Kirk ordered. He moved to the science station. "What's the current rating for the drills?"

Spock looked up. "Ninety one percent, sir."

"Not bad," Kirk replied. "It's a lot better than it was. Cancel the drills for the moment."

"You will be in charge of the team going down to Kara II - "

"Don't you want to go down yourself, sir?" asked Spock.

"No, not this time. I understand a survey team was left there a year ago - they must have quite a lot of data by now. Do you know anything about the planet?"

"Only that it is very fertile, and at first contact the natives were friendly," said Spock.

"Right. I still have some work to do in my quarters; I'll be there if you want me."

Spock nodded and turned back to his station.

As Kirk walked to sickbay he thought of his present from Bob, a robot parrot saying, "Captain Kirk of the Enterprise..." Bob liked his jokes. Kirk wished he was on better terms with the Vulcan so that he could ask him to reprogramme it... then he'd send it back. Kirk opened the door to hear Chapel doing all the taking and the Doctor standing there listening. Kirk shut the door. He would see her again.

Commander Spock, personal log.

I was hoping that the Captain would not be like his brother, and would beam down to Kara II, but this is not the case. He has not tried to push his friendship on me - in fact, he has stayed away from everyone and even done his own paperwork, but he is new; things can change. Log ends.

"We are now orbiting Kara II," reported Sulu.

"Have you got your landing party ready, Mr. Spock?" asked the Captain.

"Yes, sir," said Spock from the transporter room.

"Stand by," replied Kirk.

Spock, McCoy, Lt. Armstrong and two security men, Sherman and Davies, beamed down to the camp site... only there was nothing there. The place had been cleared.

"Where are they?" asked McCoy blankly. "If they'd decided to move camp they'd have reported it, surely."

"There are no readings for the survey team," said Armstrong.
"Only the village."

"Spread out," Spock said. "See if you can find any indication of where they might have gone."

Sherman went to the right; his eyes fixed to his tricorder, he was paying no attention to the ground, so he was taken completely by surprise when the ground gave way under him. He yelled - then screamed as a spear went through his body.

Before Spock could contact the ship, natives were on them, pulling their equipment away and dragging them towards the village. They were pushed into a space in the middle of it; a tall lean man strolled forward. He looked them over, then stopped by Spock. He examined the Vulcan's ears closely then picked up a knife and deliberately cut Spock's arm. Green blood flowed; the man touched it with his finger and tasted it. He spat.

"Take this one away and do what you like with him."

Spock was pulled away, leaving the others. The man stepped closer to McCoy. "It's been a long time since we have had fresh meat," he said, anticipation in his voice. "We will feast tonight. Take them away."

As they were dragged into one of the huts, McCoy wondered what was happening to Spock. His thoughts were interrupted by Armstrong.

"The Captain will find us, Doctor, won't he?"

McCoy looked at him. "Of course." But he turned away so that the others could not see his face. The Captain might send down a search party to satisfy regulations, but could he be trusted to do more? Sam Kirk certainly wouldn't have. A quick five minute check, and they would have been classified as 'missing'.

Spock had his clothes ripped from him and a dirty piece of rag pushed into his mouth; then he was tied to a post and a few women came up and started to whip him with a kind of strap that left painful weals. Spock closed his eyes to shut out the sight of the cruel faces; inside he was crying. He knew he would die here like an animal with no-one to help him - or even care that he was gone.

Jim Kirk paced the bridge. "Still no word from the landing party, Lt. Piper?"

She turned. "No, sir."

At any other time he might have noticed her; she had short curly hair of a light orange shade, a small face and body - the only odd thing was the two antennae on her head. Now he was too concerned about his men down on the planet. He pressed the comlink on the arm of his chair. "Mr. Scott, you have the con." He released the button. "Mr. Sulu, would you like to join me. I'm going down."

"Yes, sir!" replied Sulu as the door opened and Scott came in to take over.

As he took his place on the transporter pad, Kirk said, "Mr.

Kyle, beam us to a different landing site. One a little nearer to the native village."

They arrived late in the planetary evening, materialising near some thick bushes. The dark clothes Kirk had insisted on blended into the darkness, and Kirk used an infra-red torch so that they could see. They crouched low, using the bushes for cover as they moved towards the village.

It was lit by a huge fire; a number of natives were dancing round it while others chanted rhythmically. Kirk hissed as he saw the post with Spock tied to it, dried green blood covering his body. He touched Sulu's arm and backed away, pulling the helmsman with him.

"Come on," he whispered.

Sulu stared at Kirk in outrage. He had heard a few stories about Sam Kirk, but for a few minutes it had seemed that Jim Kirk was not like his brother; now it seemed as if he was. "You're not leaving them!"

Kirk stared at him. He'd hoped that Sulu, as new on board as himself, would not know Sam Kirk's reputation, but of course it was too much to hope that Sulu hadn't been regaled with a few tales about the previous Captain as well as the present Captain's relationship to him. "Of course not," he said, in as near a snap as was possible for a man talking in a whisper. "But we need a little more help!"

The Captain wrapped a long black cloak about him and looked at Sulu. "You're sure you know what to do?"

"Yes, sir. We're to look for the others and take them back to the ship. If we see any natives we stun them. We give you an hour before we come looking for you." Sulu looked slightly unhappy about that order.

Kirk touched his shoulder. "Very good." He pulled the cloak tightly about him as he watched Sulu and the Security contingent move away.

He then turned to watch the dancing for a moment before he stepped boldly into the middle of the village. He walked right over to the bonfire where he could see a tall, lean man not dressed like the others. His face was long and gaunt. He rose and spoke.

"You are one of *them*! You do not frighten me. *Take him!*" he yelled.

Kirk felt a shiver go through him, but he tried not to show it. He put his best voice on and said firmly, "What are you doing to the servants that I sent in peace? Is this the way that you treat them? You will all be punished."

The man took a step forward as the other natives shrank back. "Don't listen to him! I am your leader! He is a man, just like the others who came here!"

Kirk could see that the other natives wanted to believe their leader; they were gathering themselves to rush at him. He smiled as confidently as he could, and opened his cloak. Red and blue smoke rose around him and the natives fell back, staring in awe as the man in black brought from nowhere sticks of fire and glitters and more blue, red and yellow smoke. Some of them began to edge away.

"You fools!" the leader screamed. "I will show you - " He rushed forward.

Kirk had no doubt that the man intended to kill him; in one quick movement he drew his phaser and stunned the native. This was too much for the other natives; they scattered in terror. Kirk waited only long enough to make sure than none of them was going to return and then he ran over to Spock. He cut him free and yanked the gag out of his mouth. The Vulcan was shivering even although Kirk could feel the heat of the fire. He pulled off his cloak and wrapped Spock in it.

"Spock! Can you hear me?" Kirk bent his head close to Spock's but could not make out what the Vulcan was mumbling. He swung the Vulcan up into his arms and said, "You're safe now." Then he walked out of the village.

Once out of the circle of firelight he laid Spock down and pulled out his communicator. "Enterprise. Kirk here. Two to beam up."

Back on board, Kirk called a medical team to take Spock to sickbay before he went to the bridge.

Scott got out of the command chair as the Captain came towards him, but Kirk waved him back. "As you were, Mr. Scott," he said. "Mr. Sulu, report."

"We got everyone out," Sulu replied. "We didn't see any natives - they must all have been dancing round the fire - and no-one was injured except Mr. Sherman - he was killed when they landed."

"What about the survey team?" Kirk asked.

"Dr. McCoy said there was no trace of them, but he did say something about 'fresh meat'. I didn't quite understand what he meant."

The Captain nodded. He did understand. "I don't think you want to know. Set course for Starbase II. Mr. Scott, I'll be in sickbay."

Kirk walked over to the bed where Spock lay. He looked asleep.

"Doctor? How is he?"

McCoy, still shaken but not allowing it to interfere with his concern for his patient, shook his head. "He's dying, Captain. Without the Vulcan healing trance he will not last the night."

Kirk stared at him. "Healing trance? What's that, Bones?"

"Vulcans can speed up healing by a method of... call it self hypnosis. Unfortunately, without it, injuries are slow to mend and fairly severe ones that in a Human would be bad but not life-threatening can prove fatal. It's the Vulcan way." He shook his head. "There's nothing I can do."

Kirk looked down at the unconscious Vulcan for a moment; then he turned and walked out.

Kirk sat at his desk, brooding. He knew he would not be able to sleep. Knowing that the Vulcan was going to die he realised how much he would miss him - even though Spock did not want his friendship.

He got up. Perhaps a walk would take his mind from the unconscious Vulcan sinking closer and closer to death. His feet led him to sickbay; he entered and went to stand at the side of Spock's bed. He pulled up a chair, sat, and took hold of Spock's hand. It felt cool; he put both hands round it and tried to rub some warmth back into it. "Hope Bones doesn't come in and see me holding your hand... What the heck! I hope you know that you're not alone," he said aloud.

Unknown to him, McCoy sat watching the screen and listening in case Spock recovered consciousness. He was surprised to see the Captain return and sit by the Vulcan's side.

Chapel came in and placed a cup of coffee beside him. She said nothing but her eyes said it all as she left. *Yes, Jim was right - I did need a Head Nurse.* Chapel had already taken a lot of work off him, and the nurses would do anything she wanted; he knew he would miss her a great deal now if she were to leave.

He heard Kirk talking again, so he switched on the recorder and waited.

"Do you realise it's the first time I've ever got near you without you diving back into your shell? I promise I won't hurt you. Please - don't judge me on my brother's actions! We never were close. I read his tapes... I can understand why you don't trust me.

"Shall I tell you a story? When I was very young I used to pretend that I was a Captain and I met a green-skinned alien and we became good friends. He would rescue me and I would do the same for him. He came home and stayed for tea - we had home-made strawberry jam sandwiches and chocolate cake." Kirk smiled. "It was a great day.

"Soon after that I was sent to the city to go to school and I forgot all about it until I saw you on the Enterprise... only this time you were real. I'm sorry there's nothing I can do." He released Spock's hand and stood up. He felt so tired! He looked one last time at Spock, then turned and walked away, closing the door softly behind him.

McCoy stared at the screen. He did not know what the Captain had done... but the Vulcan had gone into the healing trance.

Spock felt he was floating. He remembered being tied to the

post and all the noises around him; he knew he opened his eyes to see a man dressed in black looking very much like the Captain doing magic tricks; he heard someone call his name... then blackness. He was so tired he felt his mind fading... then all of a sudden he felt strength pouring into him. Unknown to Kirk holding Spock's hand, he had made contact and that was what the Vulcan had drawn on. Spock had not consciously heard the words but he had felt the comfort of knowing he was not alone.

"Kirk to sickbay."

"McCoy here. There's no change."

"Keep me informed," said the Captain.

McCoy went over to Spock's bed. The Vulcan was sitting up reading a tape. He put it down as McCoy arrived.

"I didn't tell the Captain you were all right," said McCoy.

"Good," answered Spock. "I have an idea."

Kirk found it a long day. He would be glad when he could sign off. He had sent a message to Starfleet for them to send another ship to Kara II, one whose crew was not red-blooded. At last it was over; he logged himself off and left the bridge, feeling he could do with a drink.

As he walked to the rec room he never noticed the crew smiling at him; he just felt old. He opened the door; the room was full of people. Someone shouted, "Three cheers for the Captain!"

Kirk stood rooted to the spot. Then some of them moved out of the way and there in front of him stood Spock and McCoy.

Kirk could only stare. "Spock! I thought you were dead!"

Spock moved forward and put out his hand. Kirk took it; Spock gripped his hand firmly. "This is what saved my life," Spock said. "Unknown to you, I was able to take your strength to help me. Did you not wonder why you felt so tired?"

Kirk just shook his head, trying to stop the tears of joy.

"Jim, would you like to have tea with us?" asked Spock, and again some of the crew moved. There on the table were strawberry jam sandwiches and chocolate cake.

Kirk's eyes shone. It was the first time Spock had called him 'Jim' and he knew he was grinning.

McCoy looked at him. "Welcome home - Captain James T. Kirk."



STARGAZER

One night, San Francisco,
The city was sleeping.
A man walked through shadows to gaze at the stars.
He stood by the harbour
Intent on the heavens,
While moonlight streamed round him, like glass prison bars.

He sought brief distraction
From Starfleet bureaucracy,
From timetabled meetings and Earth-bound routine.
His feet firmly planted
On harbourside paving-stone,
His heart reaching starward where few men had been.

A boy saw him standing
Alone in the moonlight,
Alone with the yearning which shadowed his face.
He watched him in silence,
Intrigued by his presence,
Intrigued by this stranger who stared into space.

The man failed to see him,
His senses were distant;
His hazel eyes seeking some galaxy far.
The boy whispered softly,
"I've seen you before, sir,
Why search through the heavens? Why look for a star?"

"Why stand here so often
With moonlight for company?
I can sense your frustration, your longing and pain."
The stranger turned slowly,
His hazel eyes misted,
And, voice filled with passion, began to explain.

"I Captained a Starship,
I Captained a vision,
I Captained a glorious, curious team.
We sailed out together
In joyful diversity,
United in purpose - inspired by a dream.

"My silver-hulled Starship,
My beautiful lady,
A sleek combination of science and art
Was not just a structure
Of cold, lifeless metal
But a starfaring mistress, who captured my heart.

"My Starship depended
On skilled engineering,
On coaxing and swearing and fierce Scottish pride:
On a helmsman's sure instinct
On a Russian's commitment
And a lady named Freedom, who sang at their side.

"There were soft Bantu star songs
And wild Irish ballads,
And evenings with surgeons and Romulan Ale.
Inscrutable swordplay
And closely-fought chess games,
A mission to challenge - a Starship to sail.

"There were two on that Starship
A Vulcan, and Doctor,
Whose unwritten rule was to never agree.
A conflict of logic
And Human emotion,
Disguising affection they tried not to see.

"Those two stood beside me
Throughout our long mission;
One calm, cool, collected; one always outspoken.
Our friendship was tested
Through countless shared dangers.
The bond forged between us can never be broken.

"We faced difficult choices
With no-win solutions
To go by the book - to concede or defy.
To arm peaceful natures
Or see their destruction.
To alter the future... or watch someone die.

"We encountered computers,
Organian Treaties,
Found Romulan values as dear as our own.
Met Klingons with honour
And Tribbles with breeding,
Crusaders of vision and mothers of stone.

"There were lonely survivors
Of past destroyed empires,
Children, bewildered, and centuries old.
Entities thriving
On fear and destruction,
Doomsday creations and wolves in the fold.

"As we saw different cultures
The truth became clearer -
The same basic conflicts put people at odds.
And parents defended
The rights of their children,
Whether Klingons or Hortas or Vulcans or gods.

"For five years we travelled,
Exploring the galaxy,
Seeking new life-forms - expanding frontiers.
The crew I commanded
Were closer than family;
We shared joy and triumph, enchantment and tears.

"Now our mission is over,
Its purpose accomplished.
My crewmen are scattered, the best have resigned.
I accepted promotion,
I should be contented,
But I can't tear that Starship and crew from my mind.

"My friends tried to warn me,
 They knew what would happen.
 Concern for my welfare destroyed their careers.
 I abandoned my Starship
 My first, my best destiny,
 Gave in to persuasion - regretted for years.

"They spoke of commitment,
 Devotion to duty,
 The debt that I owed them - a chance to repay.
 I became a guest speaker,
 A walking recruitment,
 A "still-living legend" on Starfleet display.

"When life gets too ordered,
 And paperwork drowns me,
 I escape to the harbour - the stars understand.
 I gave up the freedom
 To reach for my vision,
 My friends, and the ship I was born to command.

"One day - I'll return
 To my star-clustered reaches,
 Where galaxies beckon, and free spirits roam.
 For somewhere out there
 At the rim of the starlight,
 A Starship is sailing - and calling me home."

The stranger grew silent
 His story completed,
 The boy left him standing alone with his stars.
 Alone at the harbour,
 Alone with his memories,
 While moonlight streamed round him, like glass prison bars.

Pippa L.




DR LEONARD H MCCOY

(Dedicated to DeForest Kelley)

Aboard the Enterprise there is a doctor,
 Testy of temper but caring too.
 This doctor has lovely eyes of blue.
 He goes by the name of Leonard McCoy,
 And he is the ship's blue-eyed boy.
 With illness, injury and death he readily battles,
 He's even been known to use beads and rattles.
 He works away with his pills and potions,
 Always with the steadfast notion,
 That one day he will be able to say,
 He has finally found a cure for a rainy day.

Christine J Jones



DOUBLE TROUBLE

by

JED

Captain James T. Kirk had been prevented from going planetside by his Chief Medical Officer, McCoy, who had waylaid him at the last possible moment before his planned beamdown to the stricken research base. The base had been closed down now, and the scientists the Enterprise had dropped off some five years previously were all back aboard her... plus two small identical twin boys who had been born on the Base six months after the arrival of the group.

Not that the scientists were happy about the situation.

"Mr. Spock. We are not going to be cooped up doing nothing for the duration of our journey!" the leading scientist said as soon as they materialised. He was a Vulcan who, like all his race, thrived on work.

"I agree," said another. "I could not cope with four months of doing nothing - again. Sir."

"The Captain has made arrangements for you to use Science Laboratory 2," Spock informed them placidly. "And you will only be on board for two weeks. We have orders to drop you off at Starbase 8."

"Good. Incidentally, Mr. Spock, where is the Captain?" the mother of the two boys - the only one wearing Starfleet uniform - asked as she struggled to keep hold of their hands.

"In sickbay - undergoing a routine medical," Spock told her despite his feeling that it was none of her business.

"Which he has no doubt been trying to avoid - if I know Jim Kirk," she replied as she released the hand of one of the twins. He promptly took advantage of the momentary freedom to head for the transporter console. "Why, you little tike! Come back here, Jimmy!"

"Nope!" came the fair-haired child's reply.

"He'd just excited, Lea, that's all," said one of the others. "And he can't do much damage in here," she added.

"No? Don't you believe it, Jane." Her attempts to reach her erring offspring were hampered by the other child. "He's so like his father - and he's always in trouble if you remember."

"Well, yes. We do all know that." She smiled at Lea.

"I will show you to your assigned quarters." Spock caught the straying child and handed him back to his mother. "The Captain has orders for you, Commander."

"I'll report to him once I've settled these two horrors, Mr.

Spock," Lea Travers replied. "If that's early enough?"

It took all of Spock's will-power not to shudder visibly at the thought of Kirk's reaction if those two ill-disciplined children arrived at his door, hand in hand with their mother. "I think the Captain would appreciate that."

Half an hour later, Commander Lea Travers found herself outside the Captain's office door, taking a deep breath. She buzzed and waited.

"Come."

The door opened. Kirk did not look up from where he sat, his desk buried in paperwork. He merely gestured for his visitor to take a seat. "I'll be with you in a moment."

Lea smiled to herself. It was clear that despite Spock's message the Captain was expecting someone else.

After a few moments he looked up. "Sorry to keep you waiting... Lea!"

"Hi, Jim. Nice to see you again," she replied. "I believe you have orders for me?"

"Yes, I have. Your assignment to the Enterprise as deputy science officer." Kirk smiled. He had enjoyed her previous stay on the ship, and was looking forward to having her around again.

"Oh. I was expecting a ground posting," she said, deflated.

"Don't you want to serve under me, Lea?" he asked, and immediately kicked himself - mentally - for the double meaning in his question.

Lea coloured. "No, I don't object, Jim. But... "

"But?" Kirk asked when the silence looked like lasting indefinitely.

"I have family responsibilities, Jim. I had hoped for a dependency posting."

"You mean the twin boys McCoy mentioned to me are yours?" Kirk asked, surprised.

"Yes, they are."

"Very well, I'll get onto Starfleet and advise them of the situation. In the meantime, you're one of my crew. O.K.?"

"O.K."

Several weeks after the civilian scientists had been dropped off, Commander Lea Travers and her sons sat in the officers' mess having a meal. The boys, restless as always, were looking around them, and spotted the Captain as he crossed to join them.

"May I?" he asked.

"Sure," the boys chorused.

"Lea?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, you may," she replied, avoiding his eyes.

"You used to call me Jim."

"That's my name!" the boy on the right said.

"Oh. How old are you?" Lea swallowed hard and looked away.

"Four and a half."

"And what's your name?" Kirk asked the other twin.

"Sammy," he said. Then, used to the questions adults normally went on to ask, he added, "My dad's a Starship Captain, and I'm going to be one too when I grow up."

Kirk paled visibly.

"Come on, boys. You've finished your tea; it's time for bed. Move it!"

"Aw, Mum... "

"Come on." Lea hurried them away to conceal her embarrassment.

Kirk stared after them. There could be no mistaking it; the boys were his sons. They were identical to the way he had looked at that age, and the age was right. But what the devil had gone wrong with Lea's contraceptive shots?

Some time later he found himself outside Lea's quarters. He buzzed and went in as the door opened.

"I've been expecting you, Jim. Sit down."

"The boys..." Kirk looked around the room.

"Are in bed and asleep."

There was a brief pause. "They are mine, aren't they?" he asked finally, holding his breath as he waited for her answer.

"Yes," Lea whispered, avoiding his eyes. She hadn't really wanted him ever to find out.

"Then why didn't you tell me?"

It was clear to her that Kirk was shocked at not being informed about his sons - not angry, but hurt.

"You know the regulations, Jim. A woman with children can only remain in Starfleet if she doesn't have a man to maintain them. You would have accepted the responsibility; I would have had to leave Starfleet. I'm not about to do that - not for them, not for anyone." She hesitated for a moment, then went on, "You of all

people should know how I feel, Jim."

"But the boys!" Kirk interrupted, then it was his turn to hesitate, not sure how to handle this situation. "They - "

"Have had all the love and attention that I can give them. Mind you, they're pure horrors, Jim. Far too much curiosity and - yes - initiative for their age. Now, honestly, if I had told you, what would you have done? Married me? I think not. You're married to the Enterprise, as well you know. You would just have insisted on your right to support the boys, and that would have cost me my job - and I love my job; I'm good at it, and - "

Her voice had raised enough to waken two small boys who, she now belatedly realised, were standing in the doorway listening.

"You're our Dad!" Jimmy said, coming into the room with Sammy close behind him.

Kirk looked at Lea.

"Yes, boys," she finally admitted. "This is your father." She was surprised at how hollow her own voice sounded to her.

Kirk looked at them, waiting for their judgement. Somewhat to his surprise they ran straight to him and hugged him.

The intercom buzzed.

Kirk disentangled himself and answered Uhura's call. "Kirk here."

"Sir, I have Starfleet for you." Uhura smiled to herself as Kirk's location flashed up on her board.

"Pipe it down here, Lieutenant."

"Aye, sir."

Kirk did not recognise the face on the screen, but he did note that it appeared to belong to a lieutenant - probably a secretary.

"Captain Kirk. I have been instructed to inform you that your request for a dependency posting for Commander Travers has been considered."

"Yes?" There was something about the voice he didn't like.

"It's been denied." Was that sympathy he detected in the secretary's eyes? "Notice of her official posting to the Enterprise will follow."

"And her children?"

"Are to remain on the Enterprise with her. Starfleet out."

"Now wait a minute - " He was answered by static, and jabbed the intercom button irritably. "Uhura!"

"I'm sorry, sir, but they've cut transmission."

"All right, Uhura. Kirk out."

"Does that mean we can stay here?" Sammy asked.

"Of course it does, silly!" Jimmy replied, adding, "Are you going to stay here with Mummy?"

He looked at her and got no encouragement. "I don't think so."

"But why not? Daddies are meant to stay with Mummies..." Jimmy said.

"... And sleep with each other at night," Sammy added.

Kirk mentally added 'precocious' to the twins' other attributes - though with luck, when Sammy said 'sleep' he *meant* 'sleep' - as he looked to Lea for help. She promptly packed the boys off to bed again.

A few days later Kirk sat on the bridge wishing for something to happen. Things were very quiet, and, near the end of his shift, boredom was beginning to set in. A burst of activity from Uhura brought him back to reality.

"Sir, there's a disturbance - " she began almost unnecessarily; from where he sat Kirk could hear a loud bang and a clatter over her intercom.

"Where?" he asked as he came to his feet.

"Rec. deck, sir."

"Yes, I heard the wreck," he commented dryly. "Spock, come with me. Uhura, call Mr. Scott."

"Aye, sir."

Scott met them at the door of the main rec. room. Kirk marched straight in - and promptly slipped and sat down hard. Given that split second of warning, Spock trod carefully and managed to remain on his feet. Scott, behind them, stopped short and stared at the mess that covered the floor.

In front of them stood one of the twins, sonic screwdriver in hand, covered with gunge.

Kirk took a deep breath. "Jimmy..." he said in a voice that boded no good to the culprit.

"I'm Sammy. That's Jimmy." The child pointed to the other twin who was sitting on the floor at the other end of the room with the control panel of the food dispenser in bits at his feet. Liquid was still dripping from it to add to the mess on the floor.

"Mr. Scott, please shut that down," Spock said quietly as he helped Kirk to his feet. Kirk winced as he put his weight on his right leg, and limped to a seat.

"All right, the two of you. Come here," he ordered.

On his way to shut off the food dispenser, Scott suddenly

realised just who the boys reminded him of. (Kirk had only told Spock and McCoy the truth.) His suspicion was confirmed when the boys said, in unison,

"Yes, Dad."

"Why did you do that?"

"Do what?" Jimmy asked innocently.

"Why did you take the panel apart?" Kirk said with controlled patience as he fought to keep his temper.

"We heard Mr. Scott tell someone it needed fixed," Sammy said.

"So we tried to fix it," Jimmy added.

"Oh," Kirk said. It was, he supposed, a logical enough explanation; it was just a pity they had managed to select the one hour of the day when the main rec. room was invariably empty.

"But I forgot it would have to be switched off," Sammy admitted.

"You won't make a Starship Captain if you forget things," Jimmy told him.

"That's enough, both of you," Kirk said. His voice was quiet but the note in it was enough to subdue them - at least temporarily. "Spock, I think I'll have to have a word with their mother about this. They've run wild long enough; a little schooling wouldn't go amiss. I'd be grateful if you would set a schedule for their education and assign someone to it. That should keep them out of trouble for a few hours a day."

"Ugh!" Jimmy whispered to his brother.

"Mr. Scott - how are you getting on with that panel?"

"It's fixed now, sir. In fact, they managed to fix it! If only they'd remembered to switch it off." There was a note of near-admiration in his voice.

"Indeed? I find that most interesting," Spock said.

Kirk stood, forgetting about his leg, which promptly gave way under him, sending him crashing to the floor once again with a yelp of agony.

"Dad! Dad, are you all right?" The twins threw themselves at him, coating him with the mess that had spurted out of the dispenser to cover them.

Spock was already at the intercom calling sickbay.

"Don't let him get up, Spock," McCoy's voice came over the intercom. "I'll be down in a second."

"I've no intention of getting up," Kirk muttered as he tried to loosen the twins' clutch.

McCoy came charging in, to slide on the wet floor and skid right into Spock, who steadied him and kept him upright.

"What happened?" McCoy asked as he disentangled himself.

"Exactly what you did, Bones," Kirk told him as McCoy bent to examine the injured leg. He winced as McCoy prodded his knee.

"You've torn a ligament in your knee, Jim. I'll need to immobilise the leg until the swelling goes down." McCoy motioned the orderly forward with the med trolley. "All right, boys, he'll live. Let him up."

Spock helped McCoy lift Kirk onto the trolley as the orderly steadied it - a necessary task as the floor was so slippery. As he was wheeled away, Kirk called back,

"Spock - "

"I will see to these two, Captain."

By the time Commander Lea Travers had been informed of the incident the boys had been washed and changed and Spock had spoken to them very seriously about the matter, talking to them in an adult manner that surprised them and made more impact than an ordinary scolding would have done.

"Mr. Spock - " she said as she came into the room and saw Spock.

"Commander, now that you are here I shall return to duty," he informed her, and turned towards the door.

"Mr. Spock, I only just heard. Is Jim all right?"

"By the time Dr. McCoy is finished he will be." He nodded to the inner room. "They are asleep now."

"You don't approve, do you, Spock?" she asked suddenly, catching Spock off balance.

He recovered quickly. "It is not for me to approve or disapprove, Commander; they are here and that is all there is to the matter. They are the Captain's children; they are important to him, therefore they are important to me. Certainly I do not approve of Starfleet's decision to leave them on the Enterprise; I cannot think that a starship of this class is a place for young children. Meanwhile, the Captain has issued instructions for them to be assigned a teacher. Ensign Lewis will begin teaching them tomorrow in briefing room 2."

"Jim's way of keeping them out of his hair?"

"No," Spock said frankly. "Jim's way of preventing further accidents."

She nodded. "Who put them to bed?"

"I did, Commander." He did not add that Ensign Lewis had helped get them washed and changed, for she had not asked that.

"Thank you." She hesitated. "Spock - do you know why Starfleet won't give me a ground assignment? I mean... I think you're right; a starship like this isn't the place for a couple of

active - indeed, over-active - youngsters."

"No, I do not; however, I believe the Captain is endeavouring to find out. Now if you will excuse me, Commander..." and he was gone.

McCoy had had to give the Captain a general anaesthetic to keep him still while he repaired the damage to the knee, then finished off the job by putting Kirk in an old-fashioned plaster from thigh to ankle in a bid to keep him off it. "Antiquated methods, Spock, but it should work and keep him immobile while the regen. treatment works," McCoy said in answer to Spock's raised eyebrow. Spock nodded; he knew as well as McCoy that drastic measures were usually needed to make Kirk obey McCoy's medical orders.

Spock seated himself by Kirk's bed as McCoy administered the antidote to the anaesthetic. After a minute Kirk groaned and opened his eyes; tried to sit up and wished he hadn't.

"Don't say 'I told you so', Bones," he sighed. He focussed on his First Officer. "Spock - any word from Starfleet Command yet?" He didn't need to say on what subject.

"No, Captain, none. How is your leg?"

Without giving Kirk time to answer, McCoy cut in. "Any pain?" His eyes were fixed on the overhead panel.

"No... not really. Can I get up?" Hopefully.

"Nope." McCoy glanced down from the panel and the twinkle in his eye told Kirk that something was up. He thought for a moment, then raised the cover and looked down at his leg. Then he glanced suspiciously from McCoy to Spock.

"Whose idea was this?" he demanded.

"Mine," McCoy admitted. "Jim, you've got to stay off that leg for three or four days and the only way to make you do that is make it impossible for you to use it. If it doesn't heal properly now you could end up lame in a few years."

"Bones, I've got work to do."

"Nothing Spock can't handle." The Vulcan nodded.

"Bones - "

"Just stay where you are and thank the good Lord for a rest. You've got another visitor, too." McCoy nodded to Travers.

"If you need me I will be on the bridge," Spock excused himself with a nod to the Commander.

McCoy discreetly left them as well.

"How do you feel? Does it hurt?" Lea asked.

"Not any more." He chuckled. "If you could have seen them,

Lea! They were a picture... and pulling that look about their eyes..."

"Just like you, then," she retorted, but smiled; she knew exactly what he meant. "That little 'innocent me' look?"

"I couldn't stay mad at them."

"I know what you mean." She hesitated. "Jim, why won't Starfleet give me a ground posting? A starship is no place for young children."

"I know that, Lea. I've tried. Believe me, I've tried!" Kirk sounded deflated. "And to crown everything Bones has put me in a cast." He gestured to his leg.

"He hasn't!" She laughed, feeling a bit better. And the old chemistry was still there between them - Kirk was looking at her with a wishful look in his eye.

He pulled her down and kissed her, long and tenderly. When he released her she looked at him, breathless. "Jim..." she protested.

"What? McCoy won't come back for a while."

"JIM! This is a sickbay, not a dating agency!" McCoy's voice bellowed. Kirk coloured as the Chief Medical Officer appeared in the doorway. McCoy glared at him. "I'll let you go back to your quarters," he relented, "but don't you dare overdo... anything. And the only work you're to do is paperwork. Understand?" He glanced at Lea. "You make sure he behaves."

A little more than an hour later, Lea pushed herself away from Kirk.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Back to my cabin."

"But - "

"Jim, I have to. I can't leave the twins."

He nodded reluctantly.

"Now, off to sleep with you," she went on as if he was one of her children. "You've had a hard day."

Kirk reached a hand to her. "Kiss me goodnight?"

"Jim, you're impossible. If you don't behave I'll call McCoy to give you a shot."

"All right, you win. I'll go to sleep."

"See you in the morning!" She slipped out.

Kirk's sleep was disturbed an hour or so later by the intercom

buzzing in his ear. Instantly awake, he reached over and flicked it on.

"Kirk here."

"Sir, I have Admiral Andrews for you," Uhura reported.

"Pipe it down, Lieutenant."

"Captain Kirk." Andrews' voice filtered through.

"Sir."

"I understand you are questioning your orders."

"Yes, sir. I am. A starship is no place for young children," he said firmly.

"You of all people should appreciate the necessity of keeping families together," the Admiral replied.

"Yes, sir, and I would be loath to lose Commander Travers' services - she is a very capable officer; but if she was given a ground posting the twins would be with their family."

"And what about their father, Kirk? Have the boys not got the right to know their father?"

Kirk stared at the screen, open-mouthed. All he could think was *Starfleet knows! How?* "I don't understand, sir."

"You, man. You have a right to know your children." Kirk could only admire the self-control that kept the Admiral's lips from twitching. "You're wondering how we know? Had you forgotten Admiral North was aboard Enterprise - and at the research base for seven months after the scientists reached there."

Kirk swallowed and tried again. "Sir, I appreciate your reasoning, but we simply don't have the facilities for dealing with children of that age."

"Consider it a problem in ingenuity, Captain. Starfleet intends eventually to send starships on longer missions, so it was decided to look into the possibility of families being included in the complement. When circumstances caused the evacuation of the research base, we realised it was the perfect opportunity to study the reactions of a family aboard the ship."

"That's all very well, sir, but it could cloud my judgement. And quite frankly if I have to deal with those two much longer I'll be in great danger of wringing their necks!"

"I'm quite sure you have more self-control than that, Captain. As for your judgement being affected - that's what we need to find out. Enterprise is our guinea pig. Your orders stand. Starfleet out."

Kirk frowned as he switched off the intercom. He could just see McCoy's face - and hear his reply - once he was told this little gem. There was nothing he could do but weather the storm, so to speak. Lea wouldn't like it either, but that would be her awareness of her responsibility to the twins speaking; at heart, he thought,

she would be delighted to be in space again.

'Sleeping on it' didn't help Kirk's mood. When he woke he was still feeling very disgruntled - indeed, he was flaming mad! He had just managed to push himself into a sitting position when McCoy walked in without knocking.

"I thought you'd be trying to get up by now," McCoy said with a sly smile; he knew how Kirk hated to be kept in bed.

"I am, Doctor, as you can see, awake but not up!" Kirk snapped.

"Sorry I spoke," McCoy replied, not sounding sorry at all as he pressed a hypo home in Kirk's thigh. Without saying anything more he turned to go.

"Bones, wait. I'm sorry."

McCoy looked at him. "What's wrong?"

"Starfleet."

The one word, combined with the expression on Kirk's face, was enough. "Don't tell me. Commander Travers' orders stand?"

"Yes. We're being used as guinea pigs," Kirk said dryly.

"Do you honestly mind having the twins on board, Jim? You loved Lea once, and from the look of things yesterday, you still do. Will it be so hard having them all here?"

"Yes. You're right - I do still love her."

"Then I'll just have to drag her down to sickbay and make sure she's up to date with her shots." Then he grinned. "Or maybe not. They wouldn't leave her on the Enterprise if she was pregnant."

Kirk groaned. "She didn't tell anyone last time - she didn't even tell me. That's the worst part of this whole mess, you know - no, wait, Bones," as McCoy opened his mouth to speak. "When they were born Admiral North reported that I was probably the father."

McCoy winced.

"Yes, exactly. That's how I felt. Imagine a Starfleet Admiral I don't even know telling me something I'd just found out. How could they be so positive?"

"That's easy, Jim. When a child is born they take a blood sample and check the DNA. My guess is that North checked against yours and Lea's and came up trumps."

"Well, with the twins as a horrible example of what our children are like I doubt Lea will get pregnant again in a hurry." Kirk looked up from the pillow. "Bones, for godsake help me to the john."

"No. Here." McCoy handed Kirk a bottle.

"What's that for?"

"You know perfectly well. Just use it - or I'll send a nurse in to give you a bed bath."

"Bones, I'm not ill!"

"No, but even with a cast on, if you try to do too much with that leg today you'll have a permanent problem. Look on the bright side; you only have to put up with being an 'invalid' until tomorrow night. I'll take the cast off then, and if the leg has been responding to the treatment you should be able to go back on light duty with just a strapping on it."

"Light duty?" Kirk repeated, looking disgusted.

"Light duty," McCoy confirmed. "Now use that bottle before you end up with a wet bed!" However, he turned away, going to the head to give Kirk the illusion of privacy while he relieved himself.

"O.K., Bones, you can come out now!" Kirk yelled. McCoy reappeared with a bowl of water, soap and sponge and a towel, which he laid down on the unit beside Kirk's bed, within easy reach of the unwilling 'invalid'. "All right, wash yourself while I empty this."

He took the bottle from Kirk, who asked innocently, "What happens if I need the other?"

"Jim," McCoy growled.

"I only asked." Kirk's face, had he realised it, wore an expression very like that worn by the twins the previous day.

"I can give you a shot to help that problem, then when I get the cast off I'll give you another to counteract the first."

"Me and my big mouth," Kirk quipped.

"Well, you will try to be smart with me, Jim."

They were interrupted by Kirk's buzzer. "Come," he said. The door opened to reveal two small boys.

"Well, come on in, boys," McCoy said as their mother appeared behind them. "And just the lady I want to see!"

"What have I done now?" Lea asked defensively.

"Why is it that every time I want to see someone they go all defensive on me?" McCoy grunted.

"Well, I... " Lea's voice trailed off.

"Let's get you down to sickbay." McCoy headed for the door, catching her arm as he went.

"But the boys - " she protested.

"Their father can watch them. This won't take long. You have your monthly shot to get." He smiled.

"Doctor, I'm sorry but I can't take the shots. I have a reaction to them. I guess that's how I felt pregnant the last time."

"I don't follow."

"If you remember, although I'd been celibate I was up to date with them the last time I was on board. I was horrified when I discovered I was pregnant. So once I got to the Base I did some tests on myself, and discovered that instead of suppressing my ovulation the shots in fact increased it - they acted as a fertility drug! The tests were confirmed by Tina North. After the twins were born I did blood checks for several months, then I started taking the shots again and did some more tests. The results were the opposite way round to what they should have been. The Vulcan Healer Serek believes it has something to do with the fact that my father was part Octavian."

"Yes, I see," McCoy said slowly.

"Well, I don't!" Kirk snapped. "Would somebody kindly explain that to me?"

"Octavian females are rumoured to be able to control their own reproductive cycle," McCoy explained.

"In other words they don't have monthly ovulation," Lea expanded. "They only ovulate when they actually want children. It seems that I am able to do that, and the hormone injection upsets my natural balance."

"Oh. I see - I think."

"All right - I want to check that out for myself. I'd rather be safe than sorry, Commander," McCoy apologised. Leaving Kirk with the twins, they headed for sickbay.

Kirk looked at the two boys who sat on the bed beside him. They both looked slightly subdued.

"Dad... "

"Yes?" *Will I ever get used to being called 'Dad'?* Kirk wondered.

"We're sorry that you hurt your leg."

"It's all right, Sammy."

"I'm Jimmy."

"Sorry." He looked from one to the other, trying to see something - anything - that he could use to tell them apart.

"It's O.K. - even Mum sometimes gets us mixed up. It can be fun." Jimmy's smile held pure mischief; it was an expression Kirk knew only too well.

"Let's see your cast, Dad." Sammy pulled the covers down to reveal Kirk's cast.

"Can we draw on it?" Jimmy asked, pulling pens out of his pocket.

"Sure." Anything to keep them quiet!

After a few moments one of the boys asked, "Dad?"

"What?" Kirk, who had started considering how he could handle having the children on board, pulled his attention back to them.

"Why haven't you got pyjamas on?"

"I don't usually wear them."

"What about briefs, then?" Jimmy asked. "Mum always makes us wear them."

"Dr. McCoy took them off."

"Why?"

"Because he had to put this cast on."

"But why didn't you put them back on after that?"

"Because I can't get them on over the cast."

"Why not?"

"They won't stretch that far."

"Why not programme for bigger ones then?"

Kirk hadn't thought of that but he quickly recovered himself. "Because I can't reach the synthesiser." He was beginning to lose patience with the way the boys spelled each other on the questions.

"Why not ask us to do it?"

"Can you?"

"Sure. What size do you want?"

"Make it medium."

"O.K."

Both boys leaped off the bed to the machine.

"I want to do it!"

"No, I'm doing it!"

"No you're not, I am!!!"

"Boys! BOYS!" By now both boys were on the floor, rolling around and yelling, and totally ignoring Kirk. "Sammy! Jimmy! Stop that at once!"

He could have saved his breath.

Spock could hear the commotion coming from the Captain's cabin. Punching in his override sequence he entered, took in the scene with one glance and expertly separated the two boys; holding each by the scruff of the neck he lifted them to dangle, feet in the air and hands still trying to reach each other.

"Enough," Spock said, quietly but firmly. The boys stopped struggling and Spock put them down. "Now, what was all that about?"

"Spock, don't ask," Kirk said helplessly as he hauled the bed covers over himself. He'd never been as pleased to see Spock as he was then.

"Dad wanted his briefs," one of the boys - Kirk had no idea which it was - said.

"He needed bigger ones," the other added. Spock's eyebrows went up into his hairline.

"He hasn't any on!" explained the first.

"I see."

"Dr. McCoy took them off," the second boy went on, "because - "

"Thank you, Jimmy, that will be enough. I understand perfectly. Now both of you run along to briefing room 2. Ensign Lewis is waiting for you. I have ship's business to discuss with your father."

Without any argument, the boys obeyed.

"You can tell them apart, Spock?" Kirk asked as Spock pressed the buttons on the synthesiser and waited for the machine to produce the required briefs.

"Of course, Captain," came the calm reply as he took the black regulation briefs from the unit and handed them to Kirk.

"Thanks." Kirk smiled, embarrassed, as with Spock's help he struggled into them. "I'll kill McCoy for this."

"It may be unethical, but it does seem to have kept you immobile," Spock replied, not even batting an eyelid.

"Ah, that's better," Kirk muttered as he subsided into the bed again. "Now, what did you want to see me about?"

"Nothing, Captain. You sounded as if you needed to be rescued."

"I did. Spock - Starfleet has classed this... this charade as an experiment. They're planning on putting families on ships and want to see how it works out!"

"Indeed, Captain," was all Spock said before the door opened to admit McCoy.

"Been rescued, I see, Jim," McCoy said as he produced a hypo.

"What's that for?" Kirk asked suspiciously.

"It's what I promised you - a bowel depressor injection. Now turn over."

"Won't my arm do?" Kirk protested.

"No. This needs to go in your backside. Turn over."

Kirk heaved himself over, and submitted with a groan. After all, he had asked for it.

Several days later Kirk still found his leg sore, but he decided to limit his movements and keep quiet about it as McCoy had threatened to put him back in a cast if it gave him as much as a twinge.

"Status report, Mr. Spock," he asked as he sat in the command chair once Spock had vacated it.

"Proceeding as ordered to Starbase Ten; ETA ten minutes exactly."

"Thank you, Spock." Kirk knew that Spock would understand the deeper meaning of his words. Starbase Ten was the stopover point for the ship's long-awaited R&R. Most of the crew was looking forward to it. Kirk himself was not; he had been backed into a corner by his two sons, who, having been told by some unwary crewman that Kirk had failed to identify, that there was a carnival, had begged to be taken to it. Kirk had finally agreed on one condition; that they both promised to leave sonic screwdrivers alone for as long as they remained on the Enterprise. To his surprise, they had readily agreed to the deal.

The turbolift door opened the two small boys erupted onto the bridge, eyes wide.

"Dad!" they chorused. Kirk swung the chair round, then stood and crossed to them.

"What are you two doing on the bridge? Spock, take the con. Now boys, let's go and find Ensign Lewis." He took a hand of each and firmly turned them back towards the lift.

"Can't we see the bridge, Dad?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I said so."

"I want to see the bridge!" Jimmy yelled, kicking Kirk on the shin. Startled, Kirk yelped and let go of their hands. They scattered; but Sammy ran right into Spock.

Jimmy climbed into the command seat. "Mr. Spock, unhand my brother! You must, I'm the Captain, James Travers!" For his age, it was a remarkable imitation of his father.

"Jimmy," Kirk said as he limped over to the command chair.

"I'm Captain Travers!"

"James, get out of that chair before I skin you alive!" Kirk grabbed him by the arm and yanked him out of the chair.

"Get off! Leave me alone, you're hurting me!" Jimmy screamed, kicking out and managing to make contact again.

"That does it." Kirk sat down, pulled Jimmy across his knee and smacked him - hard.

In the middle of it all, Sulu said, with remarkable calmness, "Docking sequence complete, sir."

"Captain, I am receiving a signal from Base Commander Lane," Uhura reported.

Kirk dumped a screaming Jimmy back onto his feet. "On main viewer," he ordered grimly. "And Uhura, get their mother up here now!"

The viewscreen changed from the Starbase to the face of the Base Commander.

"Hi, Jim - Good Lord! I didn't know you were running a nursery!"

"I'm not," Kirk growled. "Starfleet Command is using us for a bloody experiment. Jimmy - that is quite enough noise!" He couldn't remember when he was last so furious.

The turbolift doors opened and Commander Lea Travers stepped out. She took in the scene at once.

"Mummy! Mummy, Dad hit me!" Jim ran to her.

"Not as hard as I plan to do!" she said unsympathetically. She collected Sammy from Spock and marched them back towards the turbolift.

"Dad?" asked the Base Commander.

"Don't ask. It's a long story. Lea, get them off the bridge - and find out how they escaped from Ensign Lewis."

"I already know. They locked her in a store cupboard," Lea said grimly. "I found her in tears. I've left her with McCoy, but I think you'd better have a word with her."

Kirk nodded. He closed his eyes and wished to be somewhere - anywhere - but there.

"Sounds a bit like you were when you were young." Lane, who had been at school with Kirk, suppressed a smile as he spoke.

"Was I ever that bad?" Kirk demanded. Without waiting for an answer, he went on, "Now you're not about to tell me that you've got orders for me and R&R is cancelled. If you are, please don't. I don't want to disobey a direct order but neither do I want a mutiny on my hands. The crew needs a break."

"Well, yes and no. First the good news - you have six days R&R, not three."

"Why?" Kirk asked suspiciously.

"Well, that's the bad news. You're going to be doing your well-known taxicab imitation." Kirk groaned. "If you'll beam down to my office I'll give you the details. Lane out."

)

Kirk sat for several minutes, breathing deeply and steadily while he regained full control of his temper, then he made his way down to sickbay where he found Ensign Lewis still in tears. McCoy looked up and motioned him to one side.

"Spock chose her to babysit the twins because her record shows she has a strong maternal instinct and has come from a large family - she's used to young children. But she can't take much more of those two, Jim."

"She won't have to, Bones. This R&R their mother and I are going to have to settle things once and for all."

"What do you mean?"

"Boarding school, Bones. I haven't had the problems with them that the Ensign has because I've palmed them off onto her, but even so I've had it up to here with them. You know how they backed me into a corner about taking them to the carnival - and if I knew who told them about it, that person could damn well take them!" He limped over to the Ensign. McCoy noticed the limp and frowned.

"Ensign."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"It's not your fault."

"But it was. I knew what they were like, but I went into the cupboard to get some paper and they locked the door on me. Anything could have happened to them."

"They ended up on the bridge."

"Captain... Permission to speak freely, sir?"

"Carry on."

"Sir... They've been completely spoiled. They haven't been taught what 'no' means. I like children, I don't usually have any trouble with them, but I'm not used to children who have always had their own way."

Kirk nodded. "They seem to understand that they can't take liberties with Mr. Spock, and I think young Jimmy learned today that there's a limit to what I'll take from them; he won't be sitting down in a hurry. Now you go and wash your face. You're in the first group to beam down - it leaves in ten minutes - and I don't want to see you back on board for the full six days. Understood?"

"Six days, sir? I thought we just had three."

"We've just had it doubled. Now off you go and enjoy yourself."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir." With that she left sickbay.

McCoy looked quizzically at Kirk. "You spanked Jimmy?"

"Spanked? Well, you could call it that. I think I might have killed him if Uhura hadn't told me Tom Lane was calling." He rubbed his forehead. "Bones, I've got a headache."

Silently, McCoy handed over two of the special blue pills he kept for Kirk. Then he asked, "Your knee playing up, Jim?"

"My knee? No. The little brat kicked me." Kirk swallowed the pills and looked McCoy straight in the face. "Don't you dare laugh, Bones. It wasn't funny."

"Where are they now?"

"With their mother." He sighed. "I guess I'd better go down and see her and straighten things out."

"Maybe you had. Lewis is right, Jim. They do need some pretty firm discipline, and soon."

Kirk left sickbay feeling like an ogre. Boarding school still seemed to him to be the best option, but how was he to get them into one, even if he could get Lea to agree? It was becoming clearer by the minute that there was no way they could stay aboard the ship. He found himself wishing that he could get whoever was planning family ships on board for a few days... with responsibility for the boys. That would teach them the impracticality of the idea! Oh, on a ship that was designed, equipped and staffed for the purpose it might work, but there was no current design of starship suitable.

Kirk buzzed at the door, and it opened instantly. Lea was sitting on her bed, her head in her hands, crying. Kirk crossed to her and took her in his arms.

"What's wrong?"

"The boys," she replied. "I hit them today... for the first time ever."

"I hit Jimmy," Kirk reminded her.

"Yes, but you're their father. I'm their mother. I shouldn't have hit them."

Kirk held her at arms's length. "Perhaps if they'd had a father from the beginning it might have been different."

"Maybe. But... Oh, I'm all mixed up! I should have been firmer from the start instead of spoiling them the way I did... but how could I not spoil them? They reminded me so much of you! And how could I have been firmer without smacking them? A mother shouldn't smack her children..."

"Why not, if they need it?" Kirk asked. Then, as the tears began again, he said hastily, "It's O.K., Lea, but if you won't smack them we'll have to find some other solution. Because - I have to be honest - they are a problem." He sighed. "Not that we can do much until Starfleet decides that this particular experiment is over. Once we are free to act as we think best... I had thought of boarding school. I believe there's one that takes the children of serving Starfleet personnel who have no place else to leave them."

"No. No, I won't desert them. Perhaps... perhaps the best thing for me to do, if Starfleet insists on not giving me a dependency ground posting, would be to resign."

He could tell from her voice how little that option appealed to her. "No, Lea, we'll get you that posting if it kills me."

She clung to him as if her life depended on it. He lifted her chin to look into her face. The kiss was unplanned, but quickly deepened to leave both breathless.

Three months later the situation remained unchanged. Starfleet still stubbornly persisted in refusing Lea a shore posting despite Kirk's best efforts. There seemed to be a rooted belief on the part of someone in the highest authority that the presence of children on board would be good for morale, and not all of McCoy's medical reports to the contrary served to alter that misconception. Not that the crew disliked children; but - to put it bluntly - they all realised that the long-term presence of children was a liability on a ship that hadn't been designed to carry them. Kirk's attempt to get them into the Starfleet boarding school also failed; the school claimed that there were no vacancies, but Kirk cynically suspected the influence of whichever senior officer had decreed that they should be left on the Enterprise in the first place was the real problem.

Fortunately, the boys had begun to settle down. Kirk and Lea had slipped into a routine that gave them some stability and they were learning that certain things just weren't allowed and would, if attempted more than once, merit instant and unpleasant retribution. Kirk hated spanking them, but he knew that if a 'no' accompanied by a reasoned explanation didn't work, he had no alternative if they were not to ride rough-shod over everyone on board.

Had he really been such a brat? Kirk thought. *Yes - in them, with nearly every misdemeanour, he could see himself as a child - but at least there had only been one of him! At least his mother had never spoiled him the way Lea had spoiled these two.*

The intercom whistled, and Kirk lifted his head from his paperwork. "Kirk here."

"Sir, could you come down to the garden."

"Why?"

"Because I can't get your sons down from the Rigellian oak," came the frustrated reply. "And the Koroban anemone hasn't been fed today."

"On my way." Kirk ran.

By the time he arrived at the garden - the area of the ship where Botany maintained a collection of plants for study as well as the ones kept to help give an illusion of home, and which also served as a backup in the recycling of air - the boys had scrambled to the very top of the tree, which was swaying unhappily under their weight.

"Jimmy! Sammy! Come down here - NOW!" Kirk snapped.

"No," came the reply.

Kirk glanced at the Lieutenant on duty. "Call Commander Travers and Mr. Spock," he said. He turned his attention back to the tree.

Beside it the meat-eating 'anemone' was beginning to move, wakened by the smell of the boys overhead. It was three days since it had last been fed; it was getting hungry.

Kirk dragged his attention from the 'anemone' and looked up at the twins. "Will you please come down." Any of his crew would have shivered at the thought of being addressed in that quiet, even voice. But the boys were enjoying themselves too much to be prudent.

"No! We're going to stay up here. You'll have to come and get us if you want us down!"

"I won't ask you again," Kirk said, still quietly. "But if I have to come after you, you won't sit down comfortably for a week!" He waited for just long enough to decide that they weren't going to take a telling, and reached for a branch. He was half way up the tree when the door opened and Spock came in, closely followed by Lea.

"Mr. Spock!" The Lieutenant fell on the Science Officer with a gasp of relief and came straight to the point. "The Koroban anemone hasn't been fed. It's not due a meal until tomorrow."

"Feed it," Spock ordered instantly and the Lieutenant moved away hastily to get some meat.

"Boys, come down this instant!" Lea called, her voice trembling.

"No! This is fun!" came the reply from one of them.

Kirk slipped, but caught the branch above and steadied himself. He looked down at the 'anemone'; it was fully awake now, its big leaves poised, ready to catch its prey.

"Jimmy, this isn't funny and it isn't clever." He knew that Jimmy tended to be the instigator when the twins were in mischief. Sammy was more inclined to listen to reason.

"Yes it is! Look at me - I'm Tarzan!" Jimmy swung from one branch to another. Sammy tried to do the same, but slipped and fell; Kirk managed to catch his arm and hauled him onto the branch beside him.

"Are you all right?" Kirk had more sympathy for Sammy than he would have for Jimmy when he caught him.

"Think so," came the small reply.

"Well, look down there. You see that plant? It eats people. It wants you for its dinner. Now down you go - carefully, and get away from it as fast as you can."

"Yes. I'll go."

Kirk sat still as the boy climbed over him and scrambled down the tree. Then he looked back up at the other twin, who was hanging upside down, daring him to continue up the tree onto the thinner

topmost branches.

He could, of course, tell Jimmy of the danger, but he felt it was important that Jimmy decide to obey because it was an order.

"Jimmy. Come down."

"Why?"

"Because I say so."

"But why? This is fun and I'm not doing any harm."

"Because I want you to come down."

"What for?"

"Because if you want to be a Starship Captain you have to know how to follow orders as well as give them. I'm ordering you to come down."

He could see the wheels of thought going round in his son's head as he considered the statement, and added, "I'm waiting."

"If I come down you'll only smack me. I'm staying put."

"Jimmy, if you think I'm going to smack you that means you know that what you're doing is wrong. But if you come down now I won't smack you. Now please come down!" He did not like the way the branch Jimmy was hanging from was bending.

"Promise?" said the young voice.

"I promise."

"O.K., I'll come down." But even as he spoke the branch snapped and he fell. Kirk closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them again it was to see that Spock had moved quickly enough to catch the boy before he fell into the 'anemone's' leaves, retreating before the plant could react and snatch sideways.

"I'm coming down!" Kirk called. He swore as he got snagged on a branch, and pulled himself free, ripping his trousers as he did; and once his feet were firmly on the ground he stalked over to the boys. Taking their arms firmly he marched them over to the meat-eater.

"Jim, what are you going to do?" Lea sounded terrified.

He ignored her. "Stay there!" he told the boys in a tone that brooked no disobedience. He glanced round at the Lieutenant, who had just arrived back with the meat. "Thank you, Lieutenant. Give me that." He took the meat and turned back to the twins.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked them, holding up the meat.

"Yes," Sammy said in a small voice.

"And what's this?" He pointed to the plant.

"It's a plant," Jimmy replied.

"Yes. Now watch." He tossed the meat onto a leaf, which

promptly curled up and deposited the meat into the centre of the rosette of leaves, which opened to reveal what looked like a sticky tongue surrounded by needle-fine teeth, then snapped shut again.

"Did it eat it?" Jimmy asked.

"Yes," Kirk replied quietly.

"Why?"

"Because it was hungry," Kirk said. "Now, what do you think it would have done if you had fallen into it?"

"I don't know," Jimmy answered.

"It would have eaten you, silly!" Sammy told him - and then it hit him.

"You mean... that plant eats *people*?"

"That's right," Kirk told him. "If it hadn't been for that, we wouldn't have minded you climbing the tree. We were worried at the thought of what might have happened to you."

"Wouldn't the plant have choked on something as big as us?"

"No it wouldn't!" Sammy said.

"Yes it would." Jimmy still wasn't prepared to give up without a struggle.

"No it wouldn't!"

"Yes it would!"

Kirk decided to intervene. Picking both boys up around the waist, one under each arm, he crossed back to the plant just outside its reach. "Do you want to find out the hard way?"

Both boys stopped struggling and looked at each other. "No!" they said in unison, then started to wail. "Mummy! Mummy! I want my Mummy!"

Kirk put them down, still keeping hold of their hands, and led them back to their mother.

"Mummy, he was going to feed me to the plant!" Jimmy cried. "I won't climb the tree again!"

"I won't either," sobbed Sammy.

"Good," Kirk said. "Now I'd better go and change."

"And you two are going to get cleaned up. Move!"

"Ugh! I hate soap and water!"

Jimmy didn't stay subdued for long! Kirk thought. Oh, well, neither did I at that age.

Life was quiet for several days after that; the boys were as

good as gold. Kirk even found himself thinking that if they were like that all the time it wouldn't be so bad having them on board.

The Enterprise took up orbit around a previously uncharted planet; Kirk sent down a landing party led by McCoy while he remained on board to catch up on the hated paperwork that seemed to pile up every time he turned his back. Things were going very smoothly, however; he came to the last few forms and had just signed them then the intercom whistled.

"Kirk here."

"Spock, Captain. Dr. McCoy is beaming back aboard. There is a casualty... and a fatality."

"A fatality? What happened? Who?"

"Commander Travers, sir. A snake bite."

Kirk closed his eyes and swallowed hard. He took several deep breaths, then asked, "And the casualty?"

"Ensign Gomez fell and broke his leg."

"Thank you. I'll be in sickbay if you need me. Kirk out."

Kirk found McCoy just finishing dealing with Gomez' leg and followed him into his office, where McCoy pushed him into a chair then handed him a large brandy. He drank it without tasting it.

"Bones... Oh, Bones, why Lea? Why... Oh, Lord, the boys! How am I going to tell them their mother's dead?" Kirk shook with reaction as the full realisation of the situation hit him.

McCoy sat on his side of the desk, cradling his own brandy. "More to the point, Jim, what are we supposed to do with them now? Starfleet can't possibly leave them on the ship now!"

"Well, the first thing I'm going to do is give Starfleet a piece of my mind. I'll tell them exactly what I think of their stupid idea of a family ship. It just won't work!" He pushed the glass back across the desk. "Give me another drink, Bones."

As McCoy obliged, Kirk punched the intercom. "Uhura, get me Admiral Andrews at Starfleet Command."

"Yes, sir."

Kirk paced McCoy's office, back and forth, back and forth, while he waited for the call to come through, his second brandy sitting untouched on the desk. Although he was expecting it, he jumped with the intercom finally whistled.

"Kirk here."

"I have Admiral Andrews, sir. I'll pipe it down. It's audio only, sir."

"Thanks, Uhura."

"Captain Kirk." Andrews' voice replaced Uhura's.

"Yes, Admiral." He leaned on the table. "I have to report that you and your blasted experiments have left two children without a mother. I hope you are satisfied! I have repeatedly tried to tell you that this Starship is not a place for families. It is a front-line ship - "

"Enough, Kirk. Am I to understand that Commander Travers is dead? I'm sorry. However, I work under orders as well, and it was not my doing that she and the children were left on the Enterprise. I have been trying to change Admiral Johns' mind regarding having families aboard any of our present ships, but - between ourselves - he is under a great deal of pressure from his wife and daughter in law on the subject; his son is Captain of a large scout, and would like his wife and child on board with him... and is getting his mother, who dotes on him, to do the nagging.

"I'd be grateful if you would write out a full report on this - yes, I know you and Dr. McCoy sent me a number of complaints over the last few months, and these are all filed - a full report, stating the problems and disadvantages of having children aboard a ship, and what, if anything, could be done to make such a situation feasible. It has to come, Kirk. An increasing number of good officers are asking for dependency postings because they want to be near their families - they're finding that five years is a large piece out of their children's lives. We can't afford to lose so many officers to ground postings - but at the same time we can't forbid them to marry and have children."

"I do see the problem, sir, but the last few months has convinced me that having children on a Starship is a recipe for disaster! I'll do my best to make some constructive comments, but I won't promise I'll manage. Meantime, what am I supposed to do with two motherless five-year-olds?"

"It's not really my place to deploy Starships, but under the circumstances I will put the Enterprise at your disposal to take them to wherever you decide will be best for them. Of course, you could keep them with you - " Kirk made a strangled sound - "but I doubt that would be your first choice. If I can help with any arrangements let me know. Lea Travers was an old friend of mine."

"Thanks. I'm not sure yet what would be best. I still have to tell the boys... "

"Let me know when you make your decision. Starfleet out."

Kirk sat down heavily. "Bones... how do you tell children... five year old children... that their mother is dead?"

Hours later, McCoy found the twins and Kirk asleep in the bed in Kirk's cabin, tear-stains on both boys' faces. Kirk himself had cried as he told his sons that their mother wouldn't be coming back, then he had held them close as they cried themselves to sleep.

Kirk, ever a light sleeper, woke as the door opened.

"Bones." He managed to untangle himself without wakening the boys.

"Have you decided anything yet?"

"No." He ran a hand through his hair, pushing back the unruly lock that so often fell over his forehead. "Lea didn't have any relations left, and I only have my mother... and Peter, of course, but how could a teenage boy look after a couple of five-year-olds? Mum is too old to cope with these two - and Starfleet's boarding school has already turned them down."

"You could try again - your circumstances have changed, after all."

"No." Kirk's reply was instantaneous and positive. "Oh, I could be biting off my own nose to spite my face, but having been told no once by them, damned if I'm going back to them cap in hand!"

"Well, I have a suggestion you might consider."

"What?"

"Joanna. She discovered recently that she can't have any kids, and she and Pete don't qualify to adopt - not yet, anyway. Something to do with the hours he works. She lives quite near your mother, you know. Well, I contacted her last night and she's willing to give up her job and take them on. Indeed, she'd love to have them! She and Pete won't stand any nonsense, and your mother can see them any time - but of course it all comes down to what you want to do."

Kirk looked down at the boys sleeping on the bed. "First, add my surname to theirs." He looked back at McCoy. "Mum would be able to see them regularly but without having the bother of caring for them. That is what you're saying, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"It sounds a good idea, Bones. Mum would be in her element, and it would solve Joanna's problem too." He pressed the intercom. "Bridge."

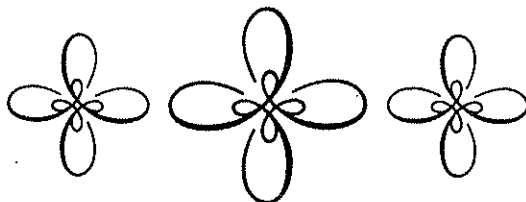
"Spock here."

"Mr. Spock, lay in a course for Earth. I'm taking my sons home. Kirk out."

As Kirk flicked off the intercom, McCoy went on. "I've filled Jo in on their antics since they've been on board, so she knows what to expect. She contacted your mother, too - and said to tell you your Mum says it's nothing unusual to have to sew ripped trousers after a spell of tree-climbing, or wash dirty clothes, or have to deal with the aftermath of a DIY job with a sonic screwdriver..."

"I get the picture, Bones - Mum's been giving away all my secrets, huh?"

"Right. I did kinda guess who they took after, Jim," McCoy said mischievously. "I've often thought that your middle name should be 'trouble'."



PIGS IN SPACE

by

Martin Stahl

"By connecting the Kappa relay with wire Epsilon you can bridge wire Rho very easily if you first enter the combination Tau-9-Iota."

Uhura yawned. She asked herself how she had got the idea to participate in this course. How could she have thought it would improve her qualifications? Already on her first day she had discovered that she was learning almost nothing that was new to her.

On the other hand, it was a variation of her duties on the Enterprise. Nevertheless, she looked forward to meeting her friends again and was already seeking a shuttle for her trip to the Ittara II colony. Two days after her arrival there the Enterprise would arrive and take her aboard. It was the shortest way back to the Enterprise... and it had the pleasant side effect that she could spend two days with her friend Sarnie there.

Her shuttle would leave in two days and apart from a short stop-over on the planet Andor would continue to Starbase 4 where she would change to the passenger ship Uzay Yolu and fly to Ittara II. According to her calculations she would be en route for about one and a half days. *Still nearly four and a half days until I see Sarnie again. And still three days in this - this desert!*" It did not occur to her to stop attending. She might, after all, still learn something.

Deeply sunk into her thoughts, Uhura chewed on her pen, when something that bounced against her nape made her jump. She put her pen onto the electronic writing pad and felt for the little ball which had been caught in the back of her collar. She looked more closely at it.

It was a little ball of crumpled cellulose.

Interesting, Uhura thought. *What was this called? Ah, yes, paper. But where did it come from?*

She knew, of course, that paper had been used a long time ago to take notes in lectures, but the electronic pad was much more practical. Did it perhaps fall down from the ceiling? But she couldn't imagine that this material was used to insulate the ceiling; there were much better substances that could be used.

Suddenly another paper ball flew over her shoulder and landed on the table. Uhura suspected that this ball was meant to land on the back of her head, too. In the same second she realised where these paper balls came from and who enjoyed throwing this antique material at her. She needn't look to see if there were any messages written on the paper. She knew the scraps of paper were blank.

She can't write at all! Uhura thought maliciously and turned slowly. She saw her suspicion acknowledged; two chairs to her right and one row behind, she sat. She wore, like Uhura, a red uniform

and the stripes of a lieutenant. But her uniform was of a larger size, necessary if it was to fit her. She was almost as broad as she was tall. In one word - fat. Her dark brown hair was cut to a length almost down to her chin and waved a little at the ends. One lock always hung in front of her left eye, and she stroked it over and over again out of her face.

It's no wonder she doesn't see very well, Uhura slandered in her thoughts. *And obviously she is also allergic to Retinax 2*. Uhura couldn't think of any other explanation for anyone wearing a pair of spectacles against short-sightedness.

Uhura remembered what Dr. McCoy had once explained to her. There were different kinds of Retinax. 1 was for long-sightedness, 2 for short-sightedness, 3 for curvature of the cornea, 4 for a squint, and 5 for long-sightedness caused by age. There were other kinds, but Uhura remembered only the first five - the most common ones.

Her thoughts of Retinax were scared away by the fat face which stared at her.

Lt. Britta Folks. *The Tellarite ambassador*, Uhura thought amusedly, and her mouth screwed up into a grin. She had given the nickname to Lt. Folks soon after their first encounter, though she had kept it to herself. Folks was not in fact a Tellarite, but she was of a similar type physically - though she had neither hoofs nor a ruminant stomach - and she was as aggressive as the Tellarites.

"Don't stare so stupidly at me!" Lt. Folks snarled at her.

Uhura turned her attention back to the lecturer and forgot Britta Folks for a moment. From time to time paper balls bounced against her head, but she just ignored them.

At last - "Please think about what I told you today. My colleague will continue at this point tomorrow, as unfortunately I will not be here," the lecturer closer her talk.

Uhura was looking forward to the evening when she would have time to enjoy herself. She had no need to spend time going over the material covered in the lecture - she knew it as well as the lecturer. *Probably better*, she thought drily. During her duties on the Enterprise she had had to construct bridges of the kind described a number of times when emergencies had arisen, and she had even had a commendation from Spock for it. The Vulcan hadn't understood why Uhura had decided to participate in this course; now she couldn't understand it either.

When Uhura entered her room, she hurled her bag onto her couch and programmed the food synthesiser for a cup of coffee. She waited the seconds it took for the cup of steaming coffee to appear in the delivery slot. She emptied it in a few gulps, took off her shoes and lay back on the couch. She crossed her arms behind the back of her neck, closed her eyes and allowed her toes to play with her bag until it fell off the couch onto the floor.

Mentally, she added up the hours she still had to spend in the lecture hall, and the hours she would continue to be the victim of Lt. Folks' attacks.

Some time, I will strike back, Uhura swore to herself. Now, if I call her 'Tellarite Ambassador' in front of the class...

Normally Uhura would not be spiteful, but enough was enough. When a certain point was reached, Uhura would hit back. She was very close to that point now; she had had enough of the hell-cat.

The first day, she had paid no attention to Folks, and Folks had ignored her; it had begun on the second day. The lecturer explained a system for maintaining communications during a magnetic storm, and a participant told them about his experiences.

"But you can't handle that so globally," Uhura couldn't help objecting. "You have to consider the different intervals of the voltages, as - "

"Who asked for your opinion?" It sounded maliciously behind her, and Uhura made her first acquaintance with Lt. Britta Folks. She ignored this remark.

Some minutes later Uhura answered the lecturer's question about a method to maintain the energy level. She explained the procedure in a very scientific way, which got very much into detail.

"Man! Uhura, don't blather such nonsense," sounded from Folks' direction.

"Why should it be nonsense?" Uhura asked. "This method has been tested several times, and - "

"Shut up, Uhura!"

Uhura didn't react, and much to her surprise the lecturer did not call Folks to order, either. She continued to explain her method.

When she asked the lecturer a question at the end of the lesson before he left the room and he stopped to answer, the already hated voice sounded behind her. "You want to worm your way into his confidence, don't you?"

The next day was almost worse.

Somehow this woman came to know that Uhura came from the Enterprise. When Uhura finally answered one of the comments directed against her with, "Shut up!", she asked,

"Well, is it actually true that you once cried at Captain Kirk? That's terrific!"

Uhura didn't know what she should answer to that. She remembered when she had burst out crying on the planet Platonius when the Platonians forced her and Kirk to kiss - but she couldn't imagine that anybody had spread this in Starfleet, as only the members of the landing party knew about the incident on the planet, and none of the would have told about it as they themselves had also suffered under the telekinetic powers of the Platonians.

On the other hand, Uhura could imagine that Folks had invented the story only to annoy her. She cast an angry glance at her tormentor, whereupon Lt. Folks said, "Go back to your Captain Kirk

and cry... again."

No. Not even Tellarites were so unpleasant. When she thought of those piglike beings, she suddenly remembered an antique two-dimensional show where puppets presented their own show. When she was a child, she especially laughed about this vain, bitchy pig-lady that played in several sketches. She had the image of this puppet in her mind when she said,

"Congratulations. I've heard you managed to get into the audiovisual three-dimensional media. They gave you the leading part in 'Pigs in Space'."

The lecturer was interrupted by a peal of laughter. Uhura heard someone saying, "'Pigs in Space'? That's good!" Lt. Folks murmured something about 'green slime devil' but that point was Uhura's.

Uhura had spent the previous evening with some colleagues. One of them, Lt. Wrana, who served on the USS Flare, the same ship as Lt. Folks, told about her experiences with the woman.

"She's impossible. To Captain Worschivk and the other senior officers she is nice and friendly, but everyone of her own rank suffers from her malignity, and as for those of lower rank... I believe she has horrible complexes and works off her frustrations on the others."

"Well, there are times when we all lose control and need to let off steam, but not as persistently as she does! How did she get into Starfleet when she is so unstable, hardly able to control her emotions?"

"I don't know. She is pretty capable... and since she's always nice in front of her superior officers, I think she can control her emotions - she just doesn't want to. Rumour has it that she got through the Academy only with great difficulty."

"No wonder. She must have come close to failing the psych tests. She's not even witty with it; when she runs out of arguments she can't find anything better to say than 'Shut up!'"

"Do you know what they say on the ship? She is like a witch. When she buys a floor cleaner she doesn't need to carry it - she flies on it."

Uhura had to laugh. She laughed so much she almost spilled her coffee. "That's good!"

"And somehow it's true. I'm anxious to know what she will think out tomorrow."

It had been the paper balls.

Uhura got up from the couch and walked slowly to the window. She saw both suns low at the horizon, the bigger one reddish, the other a yellowish white. Obviously the base was being spared the storms today. Uhura made out the first star at the zenith, and some minutes later, another one. That was Sigma Velae IV, the neighbouring planet. At times of opposition one could see details of the planet's surface even with the bare eye.

The next day Uhura had a little peace at first as the verbal attacks of Lt. Folks concentrated on the new lecturer who was good-natured, but over and over again disconcerted by the pointed remarks of Lt. Folks and the small group which had rallied around her.

But then the paper balls landed on Uhura again. *Where does she get all the paper from?* she wondered and picked a ball out of her hair again. But Folks was not one to be discouraged by lack of response. One more ball popped against her cheek. Uhura had had enough and threw it back. She even hit Folks' face.

"Bah!" Folks cried. "Uhura throws paper at me!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, quiet please," the lecturer interrupted.

After the lecture Uhura met Lt. Wrana in the cafeteria. The dry cake Uhura had selected tasted awful, but she swallowed it down bravely. She drank a drop of Wrana's coffee to wash it down.

Wrana swung her cup a little and said, "Did you notice? When she fussed about the paper ball, she couldn't really find anything to say."

Uhura nodded and bit into her cake again. She screwed her face up and chewed for a long time, very slowly. "I never ate anything as dry as this," she said when she finally swallowed it. "This cake could be straight from Vulcan."

"You will laugh - it is from Vulcan. The Vulcans call it Seishara... or something like that."

"Sai's-ahrr'rah," a male, middle-aged Vulcan corrected them as he passed their table.

When she was sure he was out of hearing, Uhura imitated Lt. Folks. "Shut up. Who asked you?"

Wrana couldn't help grinning widely. "Wonderful, Uhura. You should have become an actress."

Uhura chuckled. "Oh, I don't know. Would you like to go shopping with me? I would like to buy a souvenir from Sigma Velae III."

Lt. Wrana nodded. "Yes, I would. You're leaving the day after tomorrow, aren't you?"

When does your shuttle leave?"

"At 0.30."

"I envy you. You will soon be rid of Folks. I have to go back to the same ship as her."

"Don't worry. At the moment she has other things on her mind. I think she is busy with the man of whom she made a conquest... goodness knows how!" Uhura answered mysteriously.

Wrana set her cup onto the table. "Who is it?"

"The tall one in my line with the blond hair which is combed back and looks as if it is wet, and with the childlike face. I think he also is from the Flare."

"Oh, you mean Ensign Stoep. There the right ones have met: he's as bad as she is. Let's go now."

Both women got up, left the cafeteria and enjoyed their shopping tour.

The last day of the course. In her mind Uhura was already adding the hours she still had to spend until she met Sarnie, while she noted down what the lecturer told them purely automatically. She could have saved the effort and taped everything, but experiments had shown over and over again that one committed things better to memory by noting it down oneself. Hypno-machines were used only in emergency cases, as they often had considerable side effects.

Uhura looked round the auditorium. The blond man from the Flare stared at her and Uhura stared back until he murmured something inaudible and looked in another direction. Her mind wandered, and she overheard what Folks whispered to him. "I heard yesterday that the Flare is to go on an exploring expedition into the Triffid Nebula, which will take several months. That will be very dull. There won't be any communications in the Nebula and our Captain will assign us extra duties - thank you very much."

Uhura was not the only one whose mind wandered. An officer behind her moaned, "I have to stay four more days on this rock until my ship picks me up."

"There are worse planets than this one," Uhura murmured, "and four days will soon pass."

"Who asked you for your opinion?" Lt. Folks hissed at her.

"Who asked you for *your* opinion?" Uhura hissed back. She had really had enough of this hell-cat.

"Shut up."

"Are you now running short of arguments?" Uhura had discovered a tender spot and continued her attack. "Can't you find anything more to say? Can't you find the proper words?"

A paper ball flew towards her.

"Have you to let off steam by throwing cellulose missiles as you don't know what else you could say? In your profession you should know better possibilities of communication."

With a feeling of satisfaction, Uhura turned back and concentrated on the lecture as the lecturer was finally explaining something which was new to Uhura. She ignored the further paper balls.

Folks had another try. "You are from the Enterprise, aren't you?"

"You know I am."

"I wonder that it hasn't exploded yet."

"Why should it? You are not on board."

"Shut up!"

With the end of her lesson the lecturer ended the course and wished all participants success with their new knowledge. Uhura accompanied Wrana to her room to say goodbye because Uhura's shuttle started very early in the morning and she didn't want to waken Wrana at that time.

"Would you be so kind as to send Folks my greetings?" Uhura asked her. "Please tell her the course was very interesting and she delivered me a lot of material."

"Material? For what?"

"A little while ago I got an idea. I will write a little song about her and about my experiences with her. That surely will be funny."

Wrana could imagine that very well. Uhura had already demonstrated her musical talent.

"Will I be able to hear it too?" she asked.

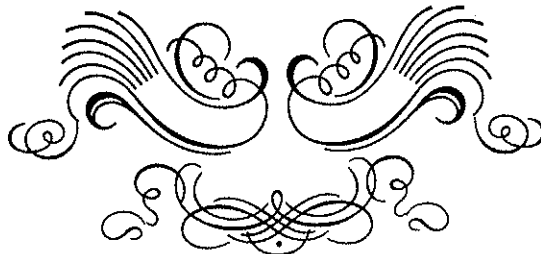
"When you are back from the Triffid Nebula, I will send it to you. I won't be able to finish it before that. And Folks will hear it too."

"I'll take care of that," Wrana promised.

"It's good of you. I'm just wondering about a title for the song."

"'The Tellarites Ambassador' would suit. Once you said something like that about her."

"Yes, but that title would insult the Tellarites." At that moment Uhura saw in her mind the picture from when she was a child. "I've got it! 'Pigs in Space'!"



PERSONALITY CLASH

by

J Schmidt

The crew was relaxing in the main rec room. Scott was explaining the finer points of Scotch to his junior officers. Dr. McCoy gazed across the room, wondering what was going to happen next. He thought back to the time he had first come on board the Enterprise, and the friction he had had with Spock - a friction which had mellowed through the years... that was, if a Vulcan could mellow! Their arguments had become legendary among the crew. Indeed, it surprised him the number of insults he had thought up over the years. It was a sign that he cared about the Vulcan, and was the only way he could show it. Apart from Jim, McCoy reckoned he was the only one on board who could see Spock's eternal struggle between his Vulcan logic and his Human emotions.

Something caught his eye; a member of the crew whom he had not seen before. That in itself was unusual; although everyone had a medical before coming on board, it was routine for them to have another one on their arrival. M'Benga must have done her physical some time when McCoy was unavailable, rare though those occasions were. He studied her curiously. She was small, and the people she was standing with towered over her. It was as she turned to leave the rec room that he noticed she had wings. They almost touched the floor and they shone with flashes of gold and silver as she left the room. McCoy made a mental note to ask her to report to sickbay on the grounds that he had not checked her out, even as he admitted to himself that it was curiosity that motivated him.

His thoughts were disturbed by a voice behind him. "Bones, are you all right?"

"What? Oh, Jim. I was just thinking."

"About that yeoman who just left?"

"I've never seen anyone from an advanced culture who had wings. Do you think she can fly?"

Kirk nodded. "She does - according to Spock."

"Ah, the all-knowledgeable Vulcan." McCoy rubbed his chin. "I was thinking of inviting her to sickbay - M'Benga must have done her boarding physical. I'd like to find out what makes her tick."

"Her name is Cho San." Kirk grinned. "And now I'd better go - I'm on duty in a couple of minutes." He got up and left.

McCoy sat where he was for a few minutes longer, but his curiosity wouldn't let him rest; he decided to go to sickbay and look up Yeoman San's records. As he entered sickbay, however, he found Chapel treating the winged girl. San had a cut above her left eye and was holding back the tears with difficulty. He decided to keep out of the way until Chapel had finished with her.

"I didn't mean to bump into him, I was in a hurry. I didn't

want to be late - Mr. Spock seems to think being late is about as bad as committing murder."

"He's always very polite, though," Chapel suggested.

"Yes... but somehow that's worse than if he yelled at me."

"So who did you bump into?"

"Ensign Lowery. He's never liked me - we were in the same class at the Academy. I hoped we wouldn't be assigned to the same ship, but... Anyway, I tried to apologise, but he wouldn't accept it. Then some of his friends came down the corridor and blocked the way, so I couldn't get away. I tried shouting, but no-one came."

"I see." Chapel thought it sounded like a little hazing that had got a bit out of hand. "I'll put in a report once I've finished with you. Security'll find him, see what he has to say for himself. Now - does Mr. Spock know you are here?"

San looked stricken. "No. I forgot. Could you tell him I'm here, please?"

Chapel pressed the intercom. "Sickbay to Science Lab."

"Sciences here." San didn't recognise the voice.

"Is Mr. Spock there?" Chapel asked.

"Yes."

"Will you tell him that Yeoman San is in sickbay; she had a slight accident."

"I'll tell him. Sciences out."

"Thank you," San said. "I'm sorry to be any trouble."

"It's no trouble," Chapel assured her. "If anything worries you, come along and have a chat."

"Any time?"

"That's right. Sometimes a chat helps more than anything we can prescribe."

McCoy decided that this was a good time to join them. "I thought I was supposed to be the advice-giver around here? Now, what's wrong?"

"Yeoman San had some trouble with Ensign Lowery," Chapel told him.

"You said to tell Spock it was an accident. I won't have you lying, Christine... though it was a white lie."

San stood. "I'd better get on down to Science."

Chapel smiled at her. "Remember - any time you want a chat, my door's open."

"Okay. Thanks."

They watched her leave, McCoy frowning slightly as the door slid shut. "What's Personnel playing at? Someone should have spotted that Lowery and San didn't get on. They should never have been assigned to the same ship."

He next saw Yeoman San in the main briefing room where the Captain was establishing the facts of Lowery's attack in the corridor. She seemed to be frightened of everyone in the room, and when it was her turn to speak she looked at the floor and he could hardly hear her voice.

What he did hear shocked him. She claimed that it was all her fault, and that she should be punished for making up the allegations of assault. McCoy glanced at Spock, who looked as if his thoughts matched the Doctor's. It was obvious to them both that she had been threatened by someone... but by who? And how could it be proved? Surely Jim would see that she was under pressure!

"Yeoman San, are you saying you made the whole thing up?" Kirk sounded exasperated.

"Yes, sir."

"Then will you please explain why?"

She hesitated, obviously searching for a believable reason. "I was frightened of what Mr. Spock would say if I was late again."

"What makes you think Mr. Spock wouldn't accept a simple explanation and an apology?" Kirk asked.

She bit her lip and looked down at the floor. When it became clear that she was not going to answer, Kirk went on. "This behaviour is unlike any you have shown before. However, it cannot and will not be tolerated on board this ship."

"Yes, sir," she whispered.

McCoy glanced at Lowery, who was still standing between two security guards. The Ensign was half smiling, and the only word McCoy could think of to describe his expression was 'triumphant'.

"You will work double split shifts in your own department as well as in navigation until further notice."

San looked up, startled. "Navigation, sir?"

"Your records show that your marks in navigation were 95%. You would have been assigned to navigation if your science marks hadn't been even higher. It is of considerable value to the ship if some of the crew is competent in more than one department."

Despite herself, tears started to run down her face. "Thank you, sir."

"That is all."

Slowly she left the room. Once outside, however, the look of shame in her eyes turned to one of intense hatred as she hurried away.

Inside the room, Kirk looked round. "The charge is withdrawn, Mr. Lowery. Dismissed."

"Yes, sir." Lowery wasted no time in leaving.

Kirk nodded to the security guards, who promptly followed Lowery out; then he rubbed his face with weary hands.

McCoy crossed to him. "Don't you think you were too hard on her, Jim? She's under some terrible pressure."

"I know. I'm quite sure Lowery was guilty, but managed to get to her with a threat she was too afraid to resist. The best chance we have of pinning him is to let him think he got away with it this time. If she's on double shifts Lowery won't have much chance of getting to her, and she might manage to sort it out herself."

"I don't think she will. She's not forceful enough. What happens if she can't sort things out?"

"Then we'll have to step in."

San's shift in Sciences dragged. Around her voices whispered - except when Spock was there - and eyes avoided hers.

How much longer can this go on? she wondered, then realised it was her own fault for giving in to the threats. When her shift finished she went to the mess hall where she sat alone and choked down a meal in silence, feeling that there was no-one she could turn to. Even Chapel must despise her now!

It was time for her shift at the helm. Dispiritedly, she left the table and headed for the nearest turbolift. The doors were closing as she approached, and she ran, realising that if she missed it she would be late.

She just made it as the doors closed, slipping as she entered to land at Pavel Chekov's feet.

He helped her up, smiling at her red face. "I'm sorry," she stammered. "I... I'm just clumsy, I guess."

"It's all right." He studied her for a moment, realising who she must be. "I'm Pavel Chekov."

"Cho San. Er... Butterfly to my friends... if I have any left," she finished gloomily.

"Butterfly? It suits you. And... you've just made a friend. Bridge!"

The lift doors opened and everybody watched as San and Chekov moved to position. Whispered voices started to go round the bridge as they looked at each other. Although it was the first time they had met, for some reason rumour had been linking their names for a few days; as he leaned back in his chair, Kirk was thinking *This will definitely fuel the rumours!* However, he doubted that anyone would try to mess with Yeoman San if Chekov was around - another reason for assigning her to navigation. He noticed the glances they

kept throwing each other, and wondered if either one was aware of the rumours.

The shift went well, with no problems. The next shift came on duty; San and Chekov left at the same time as Kirk and shared the lift with him.

"Everything fine, Yeoman?"

She glanced at Chekov as if for guidance, then looked back at Kirk. "Yes, sir; Pavel's eased me into navigation."

"Good."

San got out first, saying as she left, "See you later, Pavel."

"Da," he answered as the doors closed.

Kirk turned to Chekov. "Later, Ensign?"

"Yes, sir. I'm showing Cho the gardens and the pools."

"That's a good idea, Ensign."

San returned to her quarters to change, but as the doors opened she passed out. As she came round, the first thing she became aware of was Mr. Scott's worried face.

"Are you all right, lassie?"

"What... ? Where am I?"

"Sickbay."

She stared at him. "The last thing I can remember is saying goodbye to Pavel and the Captain. I was on my way to my quarters."

Scott looked down sympathetically. "Someone broke into your quarters," he explained gently.

It was unheard of. "How?"

"I don't know, lassie. The security alarm went off. I went to check, thinking it was just a faulty circuit, and I found you on the floor."

She struggled to sit up. "I've got to go - "

"You're going nowhere, young lady." Dr. McCoy appeared as if by magic.

"But Pavel's waiting for me. I'm supposed to be meeting him in the main rec room. And then I'll have to check my room - "

"I'll send someone to tell Ensign Chekov what's happened," McCoy said. He hesitated. "Yeoman... the walls of your quarters were covered in blood. It resembled a slaughter house. It's no wonder you passed out. But... I got Christine to check over your things. There's very little we've been able to save. Most of your belongings were ruined by the blood."

"My photos?" she asked, although she knew by the look on McCoy's face what the answer would be.

"I'm afraid they're ruined," he said quietly.

"No!" she cried, as if denying it would put everything right. McCoy had to give her a sedative to calm her down.

Chekov was just leaving the main rec room after waiting in vain for San, thinking to go in search of her in case Lowery had waylaid her in a corridor again, when Sulu ran up and told him what had happened. He headed for Sickbay, although he waited until Sulu was out of sight before he ran, bumping into several people who looked after him in amazement as he hastily apologised without slackening speed. As he approached Sickbay, however, he ran straight into Kirk, and this time he knew he had to stop.

"I'm sorry, sir. It's Cho! Something terrible's happened!"

"I know, Ensign," Kirk replied as he led the way into Sickbay.

San was lying on a bed, looking very pale. McCoy hovered over her.

"How is she, Bones?" Kirk asked.

"She's had a bad shock. I've given her something to make her sleep."

"Sulu said someone had covered her things in blood," Chekov said, almost begging McCoy to deny it.

"Yes."

"But who'd do something like this to her?" Chekov asked. "Lowery? But why? What did she ever do to him?"

"Some people don't need any reason except the feeling of power it gives them to bully someone weaker," McCoy said, "though I'm surprised anyone like that would get through the Academy's psych exams."

"Has anyone cleaned up her quarters yet?" Kirk asked.

"Security looked it over but couldn't find anything to prove who did it, then I sent Christine to salvage what she could. There wasn't much," McCoy said gloomily.

"Did she say anything?"

"She was quite controlled until I told her we couldn't save her photos."

Kirk nodded. "I had Spock check her records. She lost her family when she was five - the Travian Massacre. They were getting ready to cremate her along with the rest of her family when someone realised she was still alive and rescued her."

"She survived that... and then this had to happen. It must have seemed like a nightmare returning."

"Not just that. Her family ruled Travia until the Klingons got there."

"Poor kid," McCoy murmured. "She's been through so much..."

Behind them, a moan came from San's bed. Then - "Are you talking about me?"

"You should still be asleep!" McCoy said incredulously.

"I can fight any drug you give me." She pushed herself upright. "I'd like to go to my quarters."

"No!" McCoy had been given a fairly graphic description of those quarters. "You'd be better to stay here."

"Doctor, I've been able to survive everything that's been thrown at me so far. I think I can manage to sort out my own belongings."

"You fainted when you saw the blood - "

"It was unexpected. I know now what to expect."

McCoy studied her for some seconds. "It's against my better judgement. Chekov, you stay with her."

"Yes, sir!" Chekov replied enthusiastically.

Although unsteady on her feet, she got up from the bed and walked from Sickbay, Chekov helping her. They were both relieved when they reached her quarters.

"Are you sure you're all right?" Chekov asked, pausing at the door.

"I feel fine," she assured him. He was not convinced.

They entered, and found Chapel busy sorting out what was too badly damaged to keep. She was nearly in tears as she turned to them.

"I'm sorry," she said quietly, almost as if it was her fault.

"It's all right," San said equally quietly. She headed for what was clearly the worst pile and began to go through it. Chekov followed her, although there was little he could do except offer moral support. One by one she picked out the photos and told them who it was and where it was taken. Finally she came to the last one, and burst into tears. "This is the only one I've got of my parents. It was taken the day they brought me home."

The Humans tried to comfort her. "Maybe it can be saved," Chapel suggested. "It might be possible to clean it. If there is a way we'll find it."

"I've got nothing left now to tell me who I am."

Slowly the room was cleaned. Kirk arrived after a while to

check on their progress. He looked round, then turned his attention to San.

"Yeoman San - you realise that there is no way I can allow you to remain in these quarters. If... whoever it was can break in once they can again, and next time you might be in here. After the incident in the corridor anything could happen."

She made no attempt to deny that something had indeed happened in the corridor. Chapel looked up. "If Cho wants, she could move in with me, sir."

"That's very generous, Nurse Chapel." The privilege of a room to herself, which came with her status as Head Nurse, tended to be jealously guarded by those who had one. "Yeoman?"

"If it's no trouble, I'm glad to accept." San, too, knew how generous Nurse Chapel was being.

"It's no trouble," Chapel assured her. "To be honest, although it's nice having a single room, I sometimes miss having someone to talk to. I'll enjoy having you in with me."

Kirk looked back to San. "Remember, we have no proof that it was Lowery."

"I know, sir."

He left them gathering together what was left of San's belongings. Then, reluctantly - although she truly did appreciate Chapel's kindness - San left her old quarters and the remains of her early life.

Meanwhile, Scott was adding an extra bed to Chapel's quarters, with the assistance of Kyle, of whose discretion he was sure. "Remember, lad, this has to be kept secret."

"Has it anything to do with those rumours about Chekov and San?" Kyle asked curiously.

"No. These are Nurse Chapel's quarters."

"Ah! Then it's a secret love nest for the First Officer?"

Scott chuckled. "Now that's just your imagination running away with itself."

"Aye, sir."

A day or two later, Chekov found himself wandering aimlessly, trying to think. Everything was happening so fast! What did he want with Cho? Did he want her just as a friend, or did he want something more? And what if he was wrong? He had no idea of how she really felt about him. If she was only using him, he would feel such a fool! And the rumours going around - he had finally heard them - only made things harder.

Finally, fired with a sense of purpose, he headed towards the gym where he was sure he would find Sulu. Sulu would be able to

help him. He needed someone he could talk to and who he could trust with his deepest feelings.

There he was, fencing as usual.

When Sulu saw Chekov he waved before putting his foil down; he removed his mask as he walked over to his friend.

"Everything all right, Pavel?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure of my feelings for Cho, or how she feels about me."

"You'll find out if you dare to ask."

"How do I ask? I'm afraid in case she does not feel the same way I do."

"Well, I can tell you this. When she was in sickbay she was upset about not meeting you on time."

"Really?" Chekov asked, brightening up.

"Yes."

"I'm going to speak to her."

"Do you know where to find her?" Sulu asked, amused by his friend's sudden change of mood.

"Yes - but first there's something I've got to do."

The course of true love certainly doesn't run true - not in Pavel's case! thought Sulu.

Chekov went to the hydroponic lab where he got the officer in charge to choose a bouquet of flowers. He didn't mind the looks he got as he walked down the corridor. There was still a small doubt in his mind as to whether she cared about him or not. He even considered asking for a transfer off the Enterprise, but realised that the ship had become his second home.

He thought about home and family. Maybe that was the problem - he wanted to find someone they would like. He always tried hard to make a relationship work instead of letting things progress slowly.

He arrived at Chapel's quarters and stood nervously outside for a moment. The door opened and Scott and Kyle emerged, laughing. Cho stood in the doorway with Chapel, who was bent double with laughter. Chekov looked puzzled, then embarrassed as they saw the flowers.

"For Cho," he muttered shyly.

"I see," Scott replied with a knowing glint in his eye. He and Kyle started up the corridor, still laughing.

Chekov thrust the flowers at Cho. She smiled. "Thank you. They're beautiful."

Chapel turned away so it wouldn't look as if she was prying. There was a forced silence, neither of them knowing what to say. Chapel decided she should do something about this. "Cho asked

Scotty what he wore under his kilt."

"She *what*? What did he say?" Chekov asked curiously.

"Not a lot," Cho replied, trying not to laugh again.

"Ah. So that's what you were laughing at."

They chattered for a while; Chapel decided to go for a walk, feeling that they needed some time to be alone. She wished she could find someone who cared about her as much as they did about each other. But there was only one man in her life, and he was as unobtainable as the stars had once been. All she could do was hope and wait until the day came when he showed some kind of emotion; but it was only a dream, she knew, a dream that would never come true. If it ever happened, she wouldn't know what to do.

Slowly she walked back to her quarters. Chekov was just leaving.

She and San talked for a few minutes, then decided to go and eat. On their way to the mess, however, they ran into Lowery, who was with a crowd of his friends. They stood blocking the corridor, allowing no-one to get past. San followed Chapel as she tried to push through; but she only got about halfway when she was grabbed by two of the crowd. She tried to break free, but their grip was too firm. She kicked out, distracting them and allowing Chapel to break through.

Then Lowery stood in front of her, hatred in his eyes. "Well, if it isn't Little Miss Perfect. Still think you're better than me, do you?"

She looked at him. So he was still angry, after all this time? He hadn't changed.

"I should have got the honours at the Academy, not you! The shame of it - beaten by a blasted freak! You don't belong with normal people!"

"If you are normal, then I'm glad to be a freak," she told him. Help would come soon; the knowledge made her brave.

"Get off this ship before you have any more nasty accidents!" he growled.

"You're not the Captain." Suddenly she realised that underneath all his hard cover, he was scared.

"My father's a Commodore!"

"Really? My father was a king." She wasn't boasting.

"You hear that? A king!" he mocked. "What of? A rock?"

"No - a world rich in dilithium. If your father wants to remain a Commodore, let me go now."

"Liar!" he said as he hit her across the face. As his hand touched her cheek, a group of people came down the corridor.

"Thank Yelred," she murmured when she saw Scott and Chekov leading the group, Chapel close behind them.

The crowd with Lowery began to back off. "It's your fight now," one of them said. But they had only gone two or three yards when they were stopped by a group from Security.

As Lowery was marched down the corridor, he yelled back at San, "I'll get even with you yet. Just wait!"

It took Scott and several others to hold Chekov back.

The courtmartial was held in the main briefing room. San stood with Chekov, glancing nervously at the row of people who had caused her so much trouble. The proceedings went quickly because all but Lowery pleaded guilty. They claimed they had only meant to frighten her into asking for a transfer and that Lowery had put pressure on them by saying that his father could stop their careers if they didn't help him. None of them had been involved in the attack on San's quarters. They had to apologise publicly - Kirk decided that a public humiliation would be a good lesson for them - and were all to be transferred off the Enterprise.

Lowery, on the other hand, was to be sent to Starbase 12 to await a full hearing, the outcome of which would probably mean the end of his career in Starfleet. McCoy suspected that he was not entirely sane, and that was something that would also have to be investigated.

Life on the Enterprise gradually returned to normal - for a while.



CAPTAIN JAMES T KIRK

(Dedicated to William Shatner)

On the starship Enterprise,
There is a man with hazel eyes,
His name is Captain James T Kirk,
And his duty he will never shirk.
He is a man the ladies all prefer,
And when there's trouble, to him Starfleet will refer.
This man is brave and loyal and true,
A legend in his own lifetime too.
He commands the best ship in the fleet,
His achievements so many that none can meet.
To help him he has formed the best command crew ever known,
And between them friendship and a unique rapport have grown.

Here I will end my little rhyme,
And not because I've run out of time,
But because I've run out of things to say,
Perhaps you can do better one day.



Christine J Jones

LADY OF THE NIGHT

by

Mimi English

After many long years of practice, Uhura could man her communications console efficiently yet keep an eye on the bridge. She noticed Captain Kirk was rubbing his forehead and frowning.

Another headache, she thought and wondered what had caused it this time. Eyestrain from dealing with reports without his glasses, which had been left back in the 20th century? Or perhaps the collection of quarrelsome scientists they had on board to study the small quasar-like phenomenon recently discovered in the Orion Nebula were getting on his nerves. They certainly were grating on hers. She sighed. She had been doing nothing but handle complaint after complaint since the mission began.

Uhura saw the Captain glance over at Spock, who was conversing in low tones with one of the scientists as they both bent over the sensors at the science station taking readings. Then Kirk turned to Sulu.

"Take the con a while." He gave a tired smile. "I'm going to sickbay."

"Yes, sir." Sulu dived into the command chair with eagerness. Uhura winked at him and he grinned back. Sulu had confided in her his hopes of one day commanding the Enterprise II if Kirk ever retired.

Uhura saw Spock look up and raise an eyebrow as Kirk went into the turbolift, then she had to concentrate on her board as another irate scientist demanded to know when his call could go through to his home planet.

"I am sorry, Doctor, but we are still in radio silence," she repeated for what seemed like the hundredth time. "Yes, sir, I will notify you." She sighed. The Captain's order to maintain radio silence was unpopular but they had orders from Starfleet Command to scan for Orion pirates who had been raiding the Rigel System heavily lately and dodging their smaller vessels to safety among the immense asteroid belt surrounding the nebula.

"And if we should see one and give chase," she reflected, "my panel will light up like a Christmas tree!"

"What is wrong with the Captain?" a worried looking Chekov inquired.

"Just one of his headaches," Uhura assured him.

"Too damn bad," Spock commented. The bridge crew chuckled. They never knew when one of Spock's 'colourful metaphors' would pop out.

"He's always had headaches," Sulu reminded him. "Remember that

time we... "

Uhura blocked him out as she cupped a hand over her ear-plug and concentrated. Against the background noise of static she could hear a faint radio signal.

"That's odd," she murmured. Sulu swivelled to face her.

"What's wrong?"

"I'm picking up what sounds like a distress call on the emergency frequency." She frowned. "It's very weak - garbled by all the radioactivity from the nebula."

"That is odd," Sulu agreed. "Try to amplify it. Mr. Spock?" Sulu turned to the science station. "Think it could be a pirate ship?"

"Excuse me, Doctor," Spock said to the scientist using his sensors; he reluctantly stepped back, and the Vulcan flicked some switches. "The call appears to be emanating from one of the larger asteroids orbiting catalogue number N96, a dwarf star on the fringe of the Nebula nearest the Orion system," he reported. "I will transfer the co-ordinates to the helm computer."

"I've boosted the power and have audio now," Uhura called out.

"Put it on the speaker," Sulu directed.

Uhura flipped the switch, then,

"Federation Starship, we request your assistance," a deep voice repeated continuously through a background of heavy static.

"Sounds like an automatic distress call," Uhura told them. "Perhaps from a shipwreck on the asteroid."

"Yes, you'd better call the Captain, though I know what he'll do." Sulu rolled his eyes. "A distress call takes precedence over scientific research."

"Captain Kirk, report to the bridge," Uhura called over the intercom.

"Kirk here," he responded.

"Sir, I have picked up a distress call," she informed him.

"On my way." Kirk cut off.

When he entered the bridge he directed Uhura to put it on speaker and Sulu filled him in on what data they had.

"No telling how long it's been broadcasting?" Kirk considered for a moment. "Spock, any chance of that asteroid maintaining living conditions for survivors?"

"Difficult to say without closer observation." Spock bent over his scanner. "There is too much interference."

"Mr. Chekov." Kirk turned to the navigator. "Plot a course for - "

"Already plotted and laid in, sair," Chekov grinned.

"Very good." The Captain grinned back. "Mr. Sulu, ahead warp one."

"Coming into sensor range," Uhura heard Spock report as she busily answered calls from the scientists who were wondering what was happening.

"Ms. Uhura, disregard them for now," Kirk called to her. "Lock onto the distress call and try to make contact."

"Aye, sir." She ignored her flashing board and opened hailing frequencies. "This is the USS Enterprise responding to your distress call. Can you hear us? This is the USS Enterprise, come in, please," she repeated. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Kirk cross to the science station.

"Spock? Any sign of survivors?"

Spock raised his head. "I am unable to detect any Human lifeforms on the surface but I cannot as yet pinpoint the exact co-ordinates of the distress signal or locate debris." He bent over his scanner. "The atmosphere is too thin for humanoids to survive without life-support. The surface is pockmarked with craters and extinct volcanoes. However, there is a high level of radioactivity which is interfering with my sensors so it is possible that - "

"Captain!" Uhura interrupted. "The distress signal just stopped!"

Kirk's eyes brightened. "Someone must have survived. They obviously heard us."

"Yes, sir, a reply is coming in now." Uhura bent over her console, flicking switches, then looked up excitedly. "Captain, I have visual!"

"On screen," Kirk commanded, crossing back to his command chair. The viewscreen flickered then filled with the head of a young-looking humanoid female with intense green eyes and long, greenish-white hair woven with green foliage and a large, white flower on her forehead. Kirk exchanged glances with Spock who raised an eyebrow then glanced at Uhura.

"Any audio?"

"Coming over now, sir." Uhura made a careful adjustment then, "Enterprise," the female said in a high voice. "I am the Voice of the Dihcro. I request permission to come aboard your ship."

"Fascinating," Spock murmured.

"I am Captain Kirk. We are responding to a distress call. We... ah... were unaware there was life on your planet." Kirk gave her a puzzled smile.

She regarded him soberly. "Yes, Captain, there was a shipwreck; it was a trading vessel. We of the Dihcro learned much of your Federation. The trader unfortunately died of his injuries but we are in need of your assistance. Please, Captain." She looked anxious.

"I see." Kirk frowned. "Suppose I and a small landing party transport down to your co-ordinates and - "

"No!" she interrupted. "The Queen does not trust men, and with good reason. Please bring me up to your ship and I will explain. We are in terrible danger. There is an Orion base here and - "

"One moment." It was Kirk's turn to interrupt. He swivelled to look at Spock who shook his head.

"I have found no Orion lifeforms, Captain," Spock contradicted. "However, I have pinpointed the source of the distress call. It is emanating from metallic remains deep within a crater in which I can detect water and dense plant life, but with only one humanoid lifeform reading." He exchanged a long look with Kirk.

"It is daylight and the Dihcro are in hiding," the female explained in exasperation. "The Orions are underground. I am the Voice of the Dihcro! I speak from the trader's communication device in what remains of his vessel. Please! We need your help and in return can offer you the secret of the Orion base."

"Very well," Kirk decided. "Do you need any special living conditions prepared for you?"

"Dim lighting would be appreciated, Captain," she answered. "The Dihcro are people of the night."

"Very well." Kirk gave her a slight nod. "Stand by." He flicked off the intercom.

"Ms. Uhura." He crossed to her side. "Notify the transporter room to prepare to beam up a guest. Mr. Spock is feeding the co-ordinates into the computer. And see that the lights are dimmed between there and briefing room 3. Have Dr. McCoy meet me in the transporter room for standard sterilisation procedures. Oh, and Uhura - " He touched her shoulder. "Come and join us in briefing room 3."

"Yes, sir," she smiled, pleased to be included.

"Come along, Mr. Spock. Mr. Sulu, you have the con," Kirk gestured. He and Spock strode into the turbolift.

Uhura made all the arrangements and called her relief. When he arrived he gave a startled look at the console blinking with calls.

"Fred," she greeted him with a wicked smile. "You will have the fun of explaining to all the scientists that we are responding to a distress call. Good luck!" Her relief groaned as she headed for the lift.

"You have all the luck," Chekov complained.

"Yes, I'd like a closer look at the flower on her head," Sulu agreed. "It looked like an orchid."

"Sorry, boys," she teased. "The Captain probably thinks another woman would make her feel more at ease."

"After that crack about not trusting men, I see what you mean." Sulu rolled his eyes.

Uhura hurried to the briefing room to find the others were just being seated around the table.

"Ah." Kirk smiled at her and pointed to a chair. "Please take a seat next to our guest." Uhura looked with interest at the young female who returned her gaze and seemed to relax. "This is Commander Uhura, our communications officer," Kirk introduced her.

"I am Vola, the Voice of the Dihcro," she said formally, then smiled. "And you are the Voice of the Enterprise." Uhura smiled back and saw the Captain was pleased he had included her.

"Well, shall we get down to business, Miss Vola?" He folded his hands on the table.

"It is Lady Vola, daughter to the Queen, Nodosa, Lady of the Night, Queen of the Dihcro," she recited dreamily. "By day the Dihcro hide and rest. We are not many. We live in the one valley. Life is peaceful. The valley is rich with oxygen and very fertile. There is constant mist and it is very humid and warm from a bubbling hot spring."

She paused and glanced around at her listeners. Uhura gazed at her, entranced. The girl was very exotic looking, dressed only in vines as far as she could tell, and the large white flower on her head was very fragrant. "At night," Vola whispered, a faraway look in her eyes, "we dance in the starlight... and sing with the joy of life..." Her voice trailed off and Lady Vola fixed her gaze on Kirk. "Or so it was before the Orion pirates came. Now we live in fear. They have made a base within the extinct volcano at the edge of our valley. At first they stayed in their base between raids but recently they discovered a way underground into our valley, and came for our water. And over the past three nights they have carried off many of us and imprisoned us in their base... We think they mean to sell us," she said in horror. "We who remain try to hide but it is difficult. We.... we *must* dance the Dance of Life - it is our way," she said earnestly, then looked at Uhura. "You would understand. You too would hear the music of the night if you come with me. Speak with my mother, the Queen. She would trust you, Uhura. Come, make a treaty between us and we will show you the secret way into the pirate's base. Destroy them and the base shall be yours! We will permit you to use it in return for our protection and a promise to let us live in peace."

"That seems fair," Kirk agreed, "except for one thing." He glanced at Spock who explained.

"Our sensors cannot detect any Orion lifeform readings - nor any humanoids other than yourself." Lady Vola stiffened.

"Why would I make up such a ridiculous story, Captain?" she demanded. "The Orions are deep underneath the volcano." Kirk hesitated then gave Spock an apologetic look.

"We can find out. Mr. Spock, I know you don't like to, but - "

Spock nodded. "With the Vulcan mind meld I will know the truth. If you will permit..." He stood and reached a hand towards Lady Vola who shrank back.

"No!" she cried. "Not with you. But you!" She turned to Uhura. "You can help me prove my story. The Queen will speak to you. Don't be afraid," Vola whispered and leaned her head against

Uhura's.

Suddenly there was a warm, friendly presence in her mind, then a second, gentle and... motherly.

//Greetings, Daughter of the Stars,// a voice whispered through her mind. The presence was abruptly removed as someone jerked her head away with a cry.

"No!" Dr. McCoy, who was seated on the other side of Uhura, shouted as he grabbed her arm. Uhura swayed. The next thing she was aware of was McCoy bending over her in her chair, running his tricorder. "She's all right, Jim."

His face was replaced by those of Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock.

"What happened?" Kirk demanded.

"I'm fine." Uhura sat up and looked over at Lady Vola who was flinching back from Spock. "She's telling the truth."

"How do you know?" Kirk gazed at her.

"I felt her, sir, in my mind," Uhura explained. "The Queen spoke to me. She said, 'Greetings, daughter of the stars.'"

Kirk and Spock exchanged looks. "Are you certain it was not merely telepathic contact with Lady Vola?" Spock questioned.

"Oh, yes, sir," Uhura assured him. "They were both there. The Queen was... different."

"Well, Captain, are you convinced?" Vola asked in a triumphant voice.

"It is possible that the radioactive minerals in the area prevent us from detecting the Orions," Spock suggested.

"Bones, did you hear anything when you grabbed Uhura?" Kirk asked the doctor.

"No, not a thing." McCoy eyed Uhura.

"Of course not, he's a male," Vola snapped. "The Queen will not speak to men."

"But I would like to meet her." Kirk gave her a charming smile. "I suggest Uhura and I transport down with you." Vola shook her head and the flower bounced.

"The Queen will not come out in daylight. Perhaps at night - no, she says you are too much a Human male."

"But I am not," Spock spoke up. "I am a Vulcan. We are touch telepaths. She may speak to me."

Vola considered a moment. "Perhaps... She is undecided. She says you may come along, but no-one else."

Spock looked at her with interest. "Is the Queen mind-linked to you?"

"Of course." Vola smiled. "How else could I be her Voice?"

She is our... " She searched for words, then shrugged. "She is Queen."

"Fascinating. Captain, I respectfully suggest that Ms. Uhura and I go with Lady Volia to meet the Queen," Spock said, an eager look in his eyes.

"No, I'm the one to go," Kirk refused. "Uhura can be my go-between if the Queen won't speak to me. Lady Volia can show us the secret entrance, then we can beam down a landing party of security men to - "

"No!" both Lady Volia and Dr. McCoy exclaimed. Kirk glared at McCoy.

"Well, Doctor? Why not?" he demanded.

"You know damn well why not," McCoy muttered. "Spock's the one to go on this mission and you know it."

"I'm the Captain of this ship," Kirk snapped, getting up and pacing. "I'm not over the hill yet."

"Of course not, I didn't mean that and you know it," McCoy soothed, going over to him. "The Queen won't talk to you but she might to Spock."

Kirk ignored him and stood facing the opposite wall, fists clenched. "Then we'll both go," he said stubbornly.

McCoy sighed. He put a hand on Kirk's shoulder. "You've got to stop mollycoddling him," he said gruffly. Kirk shook off the hand.

"I'm not." Then he looked up. "Am I?"

"Of course you are," McCoy said in a gentle voice. "And who can blame you? None of us do. After what we went through..."

Kirk sighed, his shoulders slumped. "You're right..." he murmured. "But I can't watch him die again - not yet, anyway." He gave McCoy a faint smile.

Uhura looked over at him with sympathy. She herself tended to 'mother' Spock and understood how the Captain felt. In fact, she had noticed that all the original bridge crew treated Spock like a Spican flame gem. After all, he was their own personal miracle. But Spock himself didn't seem to understand what all the fuss was about. She glanced at him to find him regarding Kirk with a puzzled expression.

"Captain, I am quite capable of handling the treaty negotiations, with Ms. Uhura's assistance," he said in an affronted tone.

Kirk looked at him and sighed. "Of course you are," he said gently. "But Spock, so help me - " his voice tightened - "if you get yourself killed I'll never forgive you! So promise you'll take care of yourself."

Spock raised an eyebrow. "The hell I will," he assured Kirk, which broke the tension and his crewmates chuckled.

As they entered the transporter room Kirk ordered, "I expect you to check in every hour - understood?"

"Understood, Captain," Spock responded calmly. "Energise."

When they materialised Uhura reported their safe arrival, looking around at the wreckage of a small trading vessel in a tiny clearing, then gazed at the dense foliage with interest. The humidity made her uniform feel clammy but she took a deep breath of the perfumed air. Spock ran his tricorder.

"Anything?" she whispered.

"Negative." He frowned.

"There is still an hour until dark," Vola told them. "The Dihcro are still in hiding. Come," she gestured. "I will show you the hidden entrance to the Orions' base. Perhaps your machine can detect them there. Then I will take you to the Queen."

"Very well," Spock agreed and the three made their way through the thick foliage, damp with moisture. Filtered sunlight from the nearby dwarf star lit upon an occasional white flower among the vines, similar to Vola's though they seemed to be folded up.

"Fascinating." Spock gazed at one which was in the shadows and had unfolded. "The flowers resemble a Terran orchid of the Brassavola species, although much larger."

"They're lovely." Uhura paused to sniff it. "Heavenly."

Spock raised an eyebrow at her and bent to look more closely at it but it suddenly folded up and withdrew into the vines.

"Fascinating," he murmured again. Vola glanced back.

"This way," she gestured, ducking through the vines.

"Is it much further?" Uhura gasped as a wet vine slapped her face.

"We are almost there," Vola called back. They came at last to a grey, rocky cliff. "We are at the crater wall." She pointed. "If you look closely you can see where a door almost blends in."

She touched a crack. "I believe it must have originally been an exit route for lava from the volcano. The pirates made a door - see?" She pressed a small, protruding, rock-like knob and the door slid open.

Four Orion males gave them startled looks then roared in triumph, "Here's our thieves!"

Spock reached for his communicator but the whine of a phaser dropped him unconscious.

"No!" Uhura cried and drove at the men in fury, using every self-defence move she knew, but she was soon overpowered by three of the men. The fourth, she noted with pleasure, was doubled up on the ground.

"Where's the other female?" One looked around.

At least she had given Vola a chance to escape, Uhura thought in relief.

"You two men go after the other female," ordered the one who had Spock and gestured Uhura inside with his phaser. She balked until the fourth Orion got up, holding his stomach, and pointed his phaser at her with a glare. The leader slung Spock over his shoulder so Uhura gave in and followed. The door slid shut.

They went down a long, dark passage until they came to a vast underground chamber in what she supposed was the heart of the volcano. Uhura looked around in amazement. There were three pirate vessels and around a dozen men lounging about them eating and talking. They all grew silent at the interruption and stared.

"We've found our supply thieves," boasted their captors.

"A woman!" one exclaimed and they eyed Uhura as they gathered around. Spock was dumped on the ground. He began to stir and the leader prodded him.

"Who are you and why are you here?"

Spock said nothing. The leader turned to Uhura. "Well?"

Uhura met Spock's glance and kept silent. The leader put his phaser against Spock's head. "We don't need him. Answer or I will finish him now," he threatened.

"I'll tell you!" Uhura cried.

Spock gave her a surprised look. "No - " A phaser blow silenced him.

"Speak," the Orion leader ordered. Uhura thought furiously. "We are from a scientific research vessel studying the nebula," she said, trying to look innocent. "We picked up an automatic distress call from here and came to look for survivors."

"And the female who ran away?" He scrutinised her.

"We had just found her," Uhura explained. "She must be from the shipwreck."

The Orion put his phaser to Uhura's head and stared at the Vulcan. "I've heard Vulcans cannot lie. Is she telling the truth?"

"Quite correct," Spock said expressionlessly. Uhura gave an inward sigh of relief.

"Someone has been raiding our supplies," one of the pirates commented. "Must have been the other girl." There was a murmur of agreement.

"We must find her," the leader ordered. "Then we will stay hidden until the ship leaves."

"What if it doesn't?" one grumbled.

"A bunch of scientists?" the leader scoffed. "Even if it goes to radio for help it would be days before Starfleet ships can get

here. And we'll be long gone."

"Yeah, this is a lousy place for a base," one complained. "Damn radioactivity keeps us from telling if any ships are near and there's too many meteors to run into."

"Yeah," the others chorused.

"What about these two?" one demanded. The leader shrugged.

"Sell them. We can get a good price for the Vulcan." Spock raised an eyebrow. "You two, search them, then lock them in the storage room."

"Not the female too?" The pirate searching Uhura leered at her as he took his time. She glared back.

"For now," the leader nodded. "Find the other girl first."

The pirates shoved them into a dark cave after confiscating their communicators and locked the door. Unable to see, Uhura bumped into a warm body. Spock grabbed her arm to steady her.

"That was quick thinking, Ms. Uhura," Spock complimented her. "Your account of our presence was close enough to the truth for me to confirm it, without giving away our exact nature."

"I figured that the radiation blocks their sensors as well as ours, so they couldn't recognise our ship," she explained. "Do you think the Enterprise will find us?"

"We are now 4.7 minutes past the time for our hourly check-in," Spock commented, "but I also doubt that the ship's sensors will be able to detect our presence here."

"If Vola gets away she can lead them to the entrance," Uhura added hopefully.

"I would not count on help from her," Spock warned. "She is a master of fabrication."

"Mr. Spock!" Uhura protested. "It can't be all lies. I did feel an alien presence in my mind."

Spock considered for a moment. "Perhaps a hypnotic suggestion."

"No, I'm sure I - " Uhura stopped abruptly as she heard a rustling sound. "What was that?"

"We are not alone," Spock murmured. Uhura peered about in the dim light, but all she saw were piles of vines. The rustling grew louder. The vines were moving! Or were they - snakes? Uhura shivered and pressed closer to Spock.

"What is it?" she gasped.

"I sense an alien presence, but it is not hostile," Spock murmured. Then, along with the rustling, a strange humming sounded.

"Fascinating," Spock whispered as the vines swayed back and forth. The humming grew louder.

"The flowers are singing," Uhura marvelled. They listened in an awed silence for a moment.

"Of course," Spock said in an annoyed voice. "I should have surmised it. They are the Dihcro."

Uhura thought back over what the girl had told them of the Dihcro. "They hide by day and dance at night - yes! and she said many had been carried off by the pirates. And the flower the girl wore could have been speaking through her."

"I shall attempt to make contact," Spock announced, and stepped towards the swaying plants, his hands outstretched. He froze a few feet away and stiffened. A shudder went through him and he abruptly staggered backwards. Uhura grabbed him as he swayed.

"Mr. Spock! Are you all right?"

"Yes... " he murmured, and took a few deep breaths. "Their systems are too... emotional... too sensual for me to assimilate without... " he shuddered, "rigid control. I will need to meditate before I again - "

"I'll do it," Uhura volunteered. "After all, I spoke with their Queen once before."

"Are you certain you wish to endure their... ah... "

"Yes, sir. After all," she smiled, "I am just an illogical Human, remember?" She saw the ghost of a smile on the Vulcan's face.

"Not as illogical as some. Very well," Spock agreed. "Try to contact the Queen. Discover if she knows the whereabouts of the girl Vola. Tell her of our danger and that we will rescue her captured subjects if she aids us."

"I'll try, sir," Uhura promised and eyed the swaying plants. The white, orchid-like flower heads were dimly visible in the dark. She went over to them and reached out, gripping a vine in each hand. At first the voices sounded far away, then closer and closer and suddenly she was caught up in the song as thousands of the flowers sang in her mind. Two voices, she guessed of the two aliens she was touching, called out to her.

//Welcome, Sister! It is time for The Dance. Join with us.//

Uhura could see them - not the ones imprisoned with her but all the aliens outside in the valley, swaying in the misty night breeze, dancing under the stars. And yes, the stars were singing too, many of them were shooting across the sky. Part of her mind resisted. *No, it's just a meteor shower, amid the spectacular view of the variable nebula.* But then her thoughts were overpowered by a strong mind, kind but authoritative.

//Welcome, Daughter of the Stars. Come, join our dance.//

And Uhura, too, was there, in the valley, surrounded by the flower-people, as she raised her arms to the brilliant night sky, bright with singing diamonds of soaring lights, and she danced. All about her the Dihcro swayed and sang.

Suddenly it ended and Uhura was staring into Spock's concerned

face as he held her wrists.

"Commander! Ms. Uhura! Are you all right?" She blinked, dazed, and glanced around, bewildered.

"Where... am I? I was... in the valley. We were... were dancing..."

"No." Spock held her gaze. "You were in mental contact with alien beings. I found it necessary to break your physical contact with them in order to gain your attention." Spock continued to regard her intently as she took deep breaths for a moment.

"It seemed so real!"

"Understandable. Did you sense the presence of their Queen?"

"Yes..." she remembered "For a moment. She welcomed me. It was... beautiful, Mr. Spock," she said wistfully. To Uhura's surprise she saw understanding in Spock's eyes.

"Yes... indeed," he murmured. "Mental contact can be habit-forming." Then he straightened. "Are you able to try again to communicate directly with the Queen?"

"I'll try," she promised.

Uhura turned back to the captive Dihcro and this time touched only one. Even so, the Dance was almost irresistible.

//Queen Nodosa, I must speak with you,// Uhura called mentally.

//I am needed in the Dance, Star-Daughter,// a presence answered, then withdrew.

//Your captured daughters can be set free if you help me,// Uhura called again. //If not, they and I too will die.//

//I hear you, Star-Daughter// The Queen's presence returned. //How may I help?//

Uhura gave a sigh of relief. //Do you know the whereabouts of Vola?//

//My daughter Vola and the starchild have gone to your home in the stars,// she answered after a moment.

//Can you contact them?// Uhura persisted. Another pause, longer this time.

//It is done. You both may speak through me.//

//Vola?// Uhura called.

//Yes, we hear,// a voice answered. //I am Vola. Starchild wishes to speak with you.//

//Uhura! Are you and the Vulcan all right? Your Captain is very concerned.//

//Yes, we are all right at the moment,// Uhura assured. //But who are you really, and why didn't you tell us the truth?//

//Perhaps you would have believed me but your Captain wouldn't... He cannot hear the Dihcro,// the girl's voice answered in Uhura's mind. //My name is Rosa. My father, the trader, and I struck a meteor and crashed here. He was killed but I have survived here with the aid of the Dihcro. It's my fault the Dihcro are in danger,// she said sadly. //I have been sneaking into the Orion base for supplies. I followed them when they came to get water from the spring of the Dihcro, and so discovered their secret entrance. But they discovered their supplies were missing and heard the Dihcro singing when they searched for me after dark.//

//Why didn't they find your ship?// Uhura wondered.

//We covered it with vines and the Dihcro themselves hid it by massing together thickly, blocking their path to it,// she explained.

//When you were captured I ran back to the ship and the Dihcro aided me again until Volä and I beamed up here, but now your Captain thinks I betrayed you to the pirates. I don't think he believes I am talking to you now. Can you tell me something to convince him?//

Uhura thought a moment, then chuckled. //Yes, tell him that while he and Dr. McCoy went after Chekov in the hospital, the rest of us ate Gillian's pizza and it was delicious!//

A few minutes later Rosa told her, //He believes me now. When you were captured the ship's sensors were unable to track you within the entrance of the underground passage. The Captain will have a large security team beam there and I will guide them within. Once inside Volä can lead them to you as long as you are with the captured Dihcro.//

//I understand,// Uhura replied, relieved. //Tell the Captain I counted at least twelve pirates.//

//Understood. I will see you soon, I hope,// Rosa/Volä said, then faded from her mind. The Queen's presence intensified.

//I will help them find you and my captured daughters,// she assured Uhura. //All are united through me. Then we will talk again, Star-Daughter; now I am needed in the dance.//

//Thank you,// Uhura thought fervently at her as the Queen's presence also faded. She could feel the Dance pulling at her to join in also. Uhura ached to join it, longed for the unity of the sisterhood, to joy in the Dance of Life. But she must tell Spock. Perhaps later. Uhura sighed, releasing the flowerhead of the Dihcro she was clutching and turned to Spock.

"I made contact," she told him. "A security team is on its way. They can trace us to the Dihcro through Volä."

"Very good, Commander," Spock approved.

Uhura gave him the details while they waited and the captured Dihcro continued to dance.

It wasn't long before the door slid open and a red-shirted security man peered in at them.

"They are in here, Captain," he yelled, and escorted Spock and Uhura out into the shuttlecraft chamber.

Captain Kirk was busy directing the security men to gather all the overcome pirates together to be taken to the Enterprise. He looked up and his eyes brightened.

"Thank god you're safe," he called in relief.

Uhura glanced around for the girl Rosa as she and Spock went toward the Captain. She saw the girl hanging back, looking rather embarrassed and started to call to her, then gasped. The pirate leader, who had been out searching for the missing girl with two of his men, leaped out from behind the passage entrance and they seized the girl.

"Captain!" Uhura cried out in warning. Kirk looked up as the Orion pirate chief aimed his phaser at Spock in fury.

"You lied, Vulcan," he snarled, and fired.

Captain Kirk leaped at him with a desperate cry. "NOO!"

Kirk collapsed as the phaser discharged and two security men fired at the pirate chief before he could fire again. Others were firing at the two Orions holding Rosa, and all three collapsed in a heap.

"Jim!" Spock called in a hoarse voice as he and Uhura hurried to Kirk's motionless figure. His eyes opened as they knelt beside him and he looked up at Spock with relief, then a pleased smile.

"You... called me... Jim," he gasped out.

"It is your name," Spock murmured, helping him to sit up.

Uhura stared in dismay at the Captain's charred right side. "We've got to get him to sickbay!" she exclaimed.

"I shall take him," Spock said, carefully lifting Kirk in his arms. "Ms. Uhura, I leave you in command. Take two security men and restore the captured Dihcro to the valley," he directed. "Re-establish contact with their Queen and begin preliminaries for a treaty between the Dihcro and the Federation."

"Yes, sir," she replied, looking worriedly at Kirk's pale face as he tried to control his obvious pain.

"Spock." The Captain looked up at them. "Have them... make sure we have... all the pirates. Confine them... brig..." He bit his lip against the pain and dropped his head back against Spock's shoulder. The Vulcan looked down at him then turned and went rapidly along the underground passage.

Uhura stared after them for a moment, then noticed the security men were staring at her. "Well, boys, you heard him." She gestured at the dazed Orions who were just beginning to revive. "Get them to the brig. Frank, you and Joe come with me," she said to the two nearest men, then went over to where Rosa was just sitting up.

"Are you all right?"

"I think so," Rosa said, as Uhura helped her up.

"Feel like helping me take the Dihcro back to their valley?"

"Oh, yes!" Rosa beamed. "Just let Vola warn the Queen we are bringing men." She shut her eyes for a moment. "Vola was a bit upset by the phaser but she's all right now. She says the Queen will permit the men to come but they must leave when done."

"Of course," Uhura agreed. She led the two security men to the storeroom where they looked in amazement at the singing, dancing Dihcro. "They won't hurt you," she assured them. "Just help us carry them outside."

They all carried the Dihcro carefully down the passage and out into the valley. The men seemed unaffected by The Dance but Uhura had great difficulty not to be caught up in it as she carried two of the Dihcro each trip. It took six trips up and down the long passage but at last they were all set free.

"Ask the Queen if we can come to her," Uhura told Rosa.

Rosa smiled. "You can ask her yourself; she trusts you. Just touch Vola's head." Uhura did so and felt the Queen's presence.

//May we come, O Queen?// she asked mentally. //We have released your people.//

//Yes, Star-Daughter, you will be welcome. On behalf of all my daughters, I thank you.//

Uhura dismissed the men who beamed up. Vola guided them through the foliage and the dancing Dihcro until, at the centre of the valley, they came to a bubbling hot spring. The Dihcro who had been captured had followed and slithered over to the pool, wading in it to drink. Uhura gazed around in awe. The flowerheads of the Dihcro gathered there seemed larger, more like Vola, and the largest of all bobbed to them.

//I am Nodosa, Queen of the Dihcro. Refresh yourself, Star-Daughter, then we will talk.//

"Is it safe to drink?" Uhura whispered to Rosa. "I don't have my tricorder."

Rosa nodded and shrugged. "It must be. I've been drinking it for a month and so have the pirates."

Uhura hesitated no longer and cupped some water to her mouth thirstily. It tasted of a high mineral content but was delicious. As Uhura lifted her head she saw Vola unwind from about Rosa and dip into the pool, giving Uhura her first look at the unencumbered Rosa.

"Why, you are just a child!" Uhura exclaimed, eyeing the young girl dressed only in a ragged tunic.

"I am fifteen, which is adult by Orion standards." Rosa brushed her fingers through her long hair. "That is why I hid from the pirates. My mother is an Orion Slave Girl, which is what they would have made me," she explained. "Father was returning me to her per an agreement they had. We are considered adult at thirteen but my Human blood retarded my maturing. I have been travelling with Father, completing my studies by computer. I passed the Federation Standard last month so he was returning me to Mother against my will. Uhura," she said earnestly, "under my mother's people's

control I would be nothing but a slave, to dance for men's pleasure. I love to dance but... I am half-Human. My father is - was, a Federation citizen." She seized Uhura's hand. "I want to be also. To be free to choose my own path. Do you understand?"

"Of course," Uhura soothed her. "I'll speak to the Captain for you."

"I don't think he likes me," Rosa worried.

"Whether he does or not he will be fair," Uhura promised. "Though I don't know how badly he was hurt, so it may be a while before he can talk with you."

Just then one of the Dihcro slithered up to the women and Rosa held open her arms to it. The Dihcro wrapped itself about her.

"I love Vola," Rosa confided. "She and the Queen have made me feel like this is home... Uhura, touch Vola's head; the Queen wishes to speak to you."

Uhura touched Vola's white orchid-like head and felt the Queen's presence.

//Now, Star-Daughter, what does your leader wish of us in return?//

Uhura thought a moment in surprise. Of course, she realised, the Queen had witnessed everything Vola had seen.

//My Captain has been injured,// Uhura began, //but I am authorised to speak for him. Our wish is for peaceful co-existence among all peoples. As you have seen, there are those who would do you and us harm. If our Federation has a treaty with you we can protect you from any further raids on your people. We can see that you are left in peace.//

//That is agreeable, Star-Daughter, with one condition,// the Queen replied. //We will have no contact with males. They may have their base here but only females may come into our valley. We will welcome any of your star-sisters who wish to share in our Dance.

//I believe that would be acceptable,// Uhura agreed. //You will need at least one female on the base to speak through.//

//I would like to stay here - please?// Rosa cut in eagerly. //That would be perfect for me.//

//Starchild would be most welcome.// The Queen seemed relieved. //My daughter Vola is fond of her.//

Uhura hesitated. //Well, I would have to clear it with my Captain, but it seems a perfect solution to me.//

//There is yet an hour until dawn,// the Queen invited. //Will you not share the Dance with us?//

Uhura exchanged a look of yearning with Rosa.

"Please," Rosa begged. Uhura looked around longingly. She wanted to check on the Captain... *But it is important to cement relations with the natives, she told herself wryly. Isn't it?*

"Why not?" she decided, and winked at Rosa. "I think we deserve a break, don't you?"

It was dawn and Uhura blinked and looked around, dazed, as the Dihcro which had been wound around her during the Dance slithered away. All the Dihcro were closing their flower-heads wearily to rest for the day.

"Rosa?" Uhura gave the girl a shake and she opened her eyes with a regretful sigh.

"It's over."

"Yes." Uhura sighed as well. "Time to return to the ship."

"The Queen says we are welcome to return tonight to finalise our treaty and then take part in the Dance," Rosa said happily.

"Thank her for me and say I will gladly return," Uhura promised. "Come, Rosa, take me to your ship's radio. It's time to beam up."

"Welcome back, Lassie," Scotty greeted Uhura with a smile.

"Thanks," Uhura grinned back. "How's the Captain?"

Scotty sobered. "Mr. Spock took him to sickbay. Dr. McCoy had to operate. I havena heard any more."

"I'll let you know," Uhura promised. "Come on, Rosa," she beckoned and led the way to sickbay. As they entered, Uhura saw Dr. McCoy on one side of a diagnostic bed studying the readings over the motionless Captain while Spock was standing with hands clasped behind his back on the other side.

"How is he?" Uhura asked anxiously, crossing to them.

"He should regain consciousness any moment," McCoy told them. "He had some nasty burns," he frowned. "But he'll be as good as new in a few days."

"That's a relief," Uhura sighed.

"Commander." Spock turned his head. "Were you successful?"

"Yes, Mr. Spock, except for a few loose ends," she assured him. Spock started to comment further but abruptly turned back to Kirk. The Captain's eyes fluttered and opened. Kirk tried to sit up and groaned.

"Easy, there." Dr. McCoy put a hand on his shoulder to restrain him.

"Bones..." Kirk whispered, and glanced around. "Spock?"

"Here, Captain," the Vulcan answered. Kirk looked up at him, relieved.

"You're all right, then," he murmured.

Spock actually looked angry. "Affirmative," he said, and gave Kirk a reproving look. "Your illogical and foolhardy behaviour almost resulted in your death!"

Dr. McCoy tried to shush Spock but Kirk raised a hand. He gazed at Spock for a moment.

"Foolhardy?" the Captain said softly. "Perhaps, but illogical? No. I just couldn't watch you die again, Spock." Remembered pain filled his eyes before he closed them. Uhura saw the anger fade from Spock's face. The Vulcan cleared his throat.

"Neither would I find joy in watching your demise," Spock scolded in a more gentle voice. Kirk's eyes reopened and they exchanged a long look.

"Next time I'll just shout," Kirk teased, a gleam in his eyes, then he looked over at Uhura and Rosa and smiled. "Well, ladies, what have you to report?"

"The captured Dihcro have been returned, sir," Uhura told him. "The Queen will permit a Federation base as long as all males stay out of her valley. Females will be welcomed, however - especially Rosa," Uhura hastened to add. "She is wanted by the Queen as a go-between."

Kirk's eyes narrowed as he regarded the ill-at-ease girl. "You have caused us a great deal of trouble."

Rosa wouldn't meet his eyes. "Well? What have you to say for yourself?"

"I was afraid you wouldn't believe me about the Dihcro," she stammered. "Men can't feel their thoughts. And..." She glanced away. "If I had told you who I really was... I know you wouldn't have trusted me."

Kirk looked puzzled. So was Uhura, who touched her arm.

"Rosa? I don't understand."

Rosa looked up and straightened. "My legal name is... Rosamond Jones. My father was a trader you once knew."

"Not Cyrano Jones?" Dr. McCoy burst out with a groan.

"Cyrano Jones's daughter?" Kirk stared. Even Spock looked amazed and raised an eyebrow.

"Fascinating."

"I hope there aren't any tribbles crawling around down there," Dr. McCoy chuckled.

"Oh, no, Doctor," she assured them. "All but a few on that starbase died from the poison in the wheat. My father kept one which he brought me as a pet. As long as you don't feed them they make wonderful pets. Just give them water. They only eat to reproduce," she explained.

"Your father was killed?" McCoy enquired. She nodded.

"We were struck by a meteor. He tried to land us in the

valley, but... " She swallowed.

"I'm sorry," Kirk murmured.

"Have you any other family?" McCoy asked sympathetically. Uhura put an arm around Rosa's shoulders.

"Her mother is an Orion slave girl but Rosa is a Federation citizen, sir," Uhura defended. "She doesn't want to go back to her Orion relatives."

"Please," Rosa begged. "Just let me stay here. The Queen wants me. I'll be your go-between."

"Perhaps... but..." Kirk leaned his head back wearily. "I don't think this place would make a good military base," he repeated. "But we can't leave the Dihcro unprotected."

"I agree, Captain," Spock folded his arms. "I have questioned the prisoners and they were most dissatisfied here, with the nebula phenomena affecting their sensors. However, it would be an ideal location for a scientific outpost," he suggested.

"Why, yes!" Uhura agreed. "And that will get our irate guests off our backs."

"Yes, good idea," Kirk approved. "You and Uhura speak to the scientists about it." He looked up at Spock. "Then we will have to clear it with the Queen." He tried to sit up. "I will - " He gasped and McCoy pushed him back down.

"You will get some rest, Captain, and that's a medical order," Dr. McCoy said firmly and gestured the others to leave.

"Now wait a minute!" Kirk protested. "I was just going to say I will compose a message for Starfleet Command asking that Ms. Jones here be made the Dihcro's official representative, by the Queen's request."

She beamed at him but corrected, "Me and Lady Vola." She gestured at the Dihcro wrapped about her body. Kirk looked at the lovely white, orchid-like flower and sighed.

"Wish I could speak to her."

Rosa gave him a surprised look. "You would really want to?"

"Of course." Kirk returned her look. "That's what I'm in this business for. I know she blocked me out when I tried before when you beamed back to the ship, but..."

"You felt her?" Rosa was surprised again.

"I felt a mind trying to block me," he replied, and glanced at Spock. "I've felt that before."

"But the Captain is most persistent," Spock said with a lilt in his voice.

"Would it offend the Queen to let me speak with her?" Kirk ignored Spock's comment.

"I don't know," Rosa stammered. "She was so upset by the

pirates. She felt their minds through the captured Dihcro and they repelled her," Rosa explained. "And they couldn't hear her voice."

"Well, I'm more used to mental contact than they would be," Kirk argued. Then he smiled up at Spock. "Do you remember all the times we've had to meld with alien life-forms, not to mention each other?"

"When I saw you in danger," the Vulcan began in a hesitant voice and looked off into the distance, "and while waiting for news of your condition from Dr. McCoy, my mind was filled with mental images of other times you were in danger. And the times that we have melded..." He looked back down at Kirk. "I believe that, with my aid, you could communicate with the Queen. Especially when it is daylight in her valley. There would be no... distractions," he finished, looking embarrassed.

Uhura realised he was speaking of the Dance. Kirk looked up at him, eyes bright.

"Would you, Spock?"

"Later," McCoy said in a no nonsense tone. "There's plenty of time. You need to rest."

"Yes, Captain," Spock agreed, and gazed at him with a faint smile. "We have time, thanks to my damned illogical Human friends."

(The song is loosely based on the tune of 'Staying Alive' sung by the Bee Gees, written by Barry, Rolin and Maurice Gibbs)

THE DANCE

Dance, dance, dance, dance,
On through the night, all through the night.
Dance, dance, dance, dance,
On through the night, all through the night.

Hear the music of the stars,
Day is gone, the night is ours.

CHORUS

Dancing all our cares away,
Until the night turns into day.

CHORUS

Live to dance and dance to live,
Share the joy our dance will give.

CHORUS

Sisters all beneath the stars,
Dance with us, the night is ours.



A QUIET NOISE

by

Gloria Fry

Lt. Hadley sighed with relief when his shift on the bridge ended. Sulu relieved him without a glance, and quickly he left the helmsman's chair, silently making his way to the turbolift.

Once in Rec Room III he relaxed, punched up a plate of chicken soup from the food selector, and took it over to the nearest empty table. As he contentedly sipped the hot and tasty broth, his one good friend aboard the Enterprise settled down into the opposite chair.

"What a day!" Lt. Leslie complained. "Now I'm in environmental control. I don't know what the hell I'm meant to be doing! I get shifted around all over this ship."

Hadley stared at him in annoyance. "They do just the same to me! But it's all right for you, Leslie; people talk to you. I am totally ignored." He leaned forward, jabbing his finger at his friend. "Today I'm on helm... so who do you think Kirk orders to go to warp five? Yours truly? Not bloody likely. Chekov on navigation gets the instruction. Yesterday I was on navigation. Who was told to lay in a course to Beta Trianguli 17? You guessed it. The helmsman - Sulu. It happens like that all the time. Sometimes I feel like the Invisible Man!"

"You think you got troubles?" Leslie said unsympathetically. "I got killed by the cloud creatures on Argus 10 and they still expect me to carry on with my duties! One day I'm sent to engineering, the next, security - another day, helm or engineering. It's too much to expect from a dead man!"

Hadley snorted with disdain. "At least they don't ignore you. At least they allow you to talk occasionally! Kirk never speaks to me; Spock barely acknowledges my presence..."

"You're lucky!" Leslie tried to reassure him. "I can never understand Kirk, he talks such gobbledegook. One time on the bridge he kept shaking me because I couldn't figure out what he was saying! And as for the Vulcan First Officer with his 'perfect' memory... he called me Rand once! I ask you, Hadley, do I look like Janice? Tell me the truth."

Hadley grinned. "Well, she is prettier than you are..."

Lt. Kyle, who was sitting at the next table, had overheard their conversation. "You think you have such a hard time? Kirk can't even pronounce my name properly! He calls me 'Cowl'..."

"Isn't that something you wear over your head?" asked Leslie.

Kyle ignored his remark. "Then there's Scotty; always giving me orders - and he enjoys it too, I'd swear. It's embarrassing for an Englishman like myself to be told what to do by a Scot."

"But isn't Kyle a Scottish name?" Leslie asked.

Kyle scowled at him. "Dead men should keep quiet."

"I like Mr. Scott," Hadley said. "At least he talks to me, even if he never lets me answer."

"But he gets so excited," Leslie chipped in. "He speaks in that broad Scots accent... he comes out with all those strange words... He's almost as incomprehensible as the Captain!"

The three men sighed deeply as they reflected on the many problems they had to endure with their senior officers.

"Don't complain, Lt. Hadley." A female voice intruded on their thoughts. "If I say anything other than 'Hailing frequencies open, sir,' or 'Captain, I'm frightened,' I'm very lucky. If you're not careful, you might be expected to say something like that... Better to be silent."

Hadley grinned up at Uhura, and she laughed at his expression. "People like you are the life's blood of the Enterprise," she continued. "None of us would manage without you."

"One time," Leslie said, interrupting the moment, "I mutinied. Remember Omicron Ceti III, the place with the spores? I told Kirk - I told him good! He didn't like it... boy, I shocked him!" He grinned widely. "It was my finest speech."

Ensign Chekov came over to the table. "The Keptin pokes fun at me. He vill not believe that all major discoveries vere inwented by little old ladies from Leningrad. He vood not let me assist him in talking to Lt. Palomas on Apollo's planet, cos I vos only twenty two." He sat and drummed his fingers on the table. "Ven I am on navigation he vill tell me to do the vork of the helmsman, and if Mr. Spock is not on the bridge he expects me to run back and forth between my station and the science console. 'Do this, Chekov... Do that, Chekov...' It is not wery fair."

Hadley almost groaned. Why was he getting everyone's complaints? All he had been trying to do was have a quiet moan!

Lt. Riley joined them. "He doesn't like my singing. I just can't understand why!"

Christine Chapel came over. "On Exo III, the Captain held my hand in the underground caverns and tried to protect me. He tries to forget that I am as tall as he... Male ego! All Human men are the same..." She smiled dreamily. Now Vulcan men... They were different!

"He shouts at me often," Uhura complained.

"He shouts at everyone," Chekov added.

"He is very quick-tempered," Leslie said eagerly. "He even shouts at Spock!"

"He loses his temper with me all the time," Dr. McCoy said, joining them. "And he won't keep to the diet I put him on."

Angered by everyone's chatter, Lt. Hadley stood up and cried, "He ignores me....."

Silence descended upon the room as they all stared at the outraged expression on Hadley's face. It was only broken when the intercom stuttered into life.

"Lt. Hadley to the bridge," Kirk's voice said briskly.

All the colour drained from Hadley's thin face. The message repeated, "Lt. Hadley to the bridge."

"He's calling me!" Hadley exclaimed with delight. *"He knows I exist!"*

He walked to the door, broke into a run and made his way to the bridge at top speed, his heart pounding uncontrollably. He could barely believe it! Recognition at last! Kirk would speak to him - he, Silas Hadley, would answer. After all these years of silence, *he would answer!*

With joy in his heart, he bounded down the steps to Kirk's chair and stood expectantly beside him, awaiting the great moment.

Slowly Kirk swivelled around to face him, and Hadley smiled to see the sparkle of joy in his Captain's eyes. "Lt. Hadley - we are all taking shore leave on Beta Trianguli 17. You have the con."

Stunned beyond belief, Hadley stood there open-mouthed and speechless as the full bridge crew immediately left.

He stared at the lovely planet on the viewscreen, then around the empty bridge, numbly noting that all stations had been left on automatic. His lip quivered as he suddenly realised that he was being left alone on the Enterprise without even anyone left to ignore him.

"Captain..." he whispered miserably. "C...Captain... I'm frightened..."

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CHEKOV

(Dedicated to Walter Koenig)

Your name is Pavel Chekov;
 You are a Russian and proud of it,
 And because of this you like to claim
 That everything began in Russia -
 Including the Garden of Eden.
 Yours is the skill that plots the course
 That takes the Enterprise and her crew
 From one planet to another.
 But your interests also include science
 As well as navigation,
 And you have learned a great deal
 From the Enterprise's Science Officer, Spock.
 Along with the rest of your friends and fellow officers,
 You do not pretend to be something which you are not,
 You are simply yourself,
 Which is all that matters.

Christine J Jones

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EDGE OF YESTERDAY

by

Patricia de Voss

Commander Scott woke with the worst headache he could ever remember having. Once he opened his eyes to the unfamiliar surroundings his headache became worse. The only thing he recognized was the still sleeping Chekov in the other bed. Then he heard a voice address him.

"Welcome, Commander Scott. I am so pleased that you are well."

"And who might you be?"

"My name is Tenak. Your ship crashed on my farm."

"Where are we?"

"You are on Nova. It is a small farming community on the edge of the expanding Galactic Empire."

"The Galactic Empire? Where in Hades is that?"

"I am afraid I can give you no point of reference that you would understand. Would you care to come into my study?"

Scott looked over at the still sleeping Chekov then back at Tenak, concern showing on his face.

"Do not worry about your friend. He will be all right. The robots will alert us if there is any trouble."

As they walked towards the study Scott, for the first time, noticed how many robots there were around.

"Why do you have so many robots?"

"Who else would operate and run the farm?" Tenak asked, startled by the unusualness of the question.

The study was just the same as the room they had left, except for a wall of books to one side and a computer terminal on the other.

"You see, my hobby is ancient history," he said as he went to pick up a small object and handed it to Scott. It looked like a Starfleet insignia.

"A friend of mine found this for me on one of his trips. It is said to belong to a military group known as Starfleet. They used it as a communication device. Would you care for a drink?"

"Yes. Something strong. I think I'm going to need it."

Tenak then proceeded to tell Scott about his world. He also seemed very excited about the information that was stored in the

shuttle memory bank.

"You see, to the people of the Galactic Empire, your Starfleet is just a myth. Like... oh, like the story of Mother Earth. Now I have proof. Now they will have to believe me! I hope you do not mind me just taking the information, but there were library officials here for a visit and as they were about to leave I just had to give them the information. It is a shame that it did not process the whereabouts for Earth. That is what would have been the most interesting."

"The lad is a navigator, I'm sure he could find the way."

"I'm afraid it would be too far, even for him. You see, your Starfleet has not existed for some three thousand years."

Scott drank the rest of his drink in one gulp and then shakily asked, "What about the United Federation of Planets?"

"I'm afraid it has all passed into history... or even legend. You must remember, Commander, to us it was all a very long time ago. I only know because I study history as a hobby; to me life back then was an adventure as the first Humans took off across the stars. That is why your computer information was so valuable - it proves my theory that our ancestors all came from the one planet! But Earth is now nothing more than a myth."

"But what about the Klingons, the Romulans?"

"I believe the Klingon Empire joined with the Federation, a most noteworthy event as they had been such bitter enemies. The Romulans were heard of for a while and then they just vanished. After there had been no contact for some three centuries a vessel was sent to investigate. On all the planets right up to what was believed to be their home world there were no signs that Romulans ever existed."

"But what of all the other worlds? The Vulcans, the Andorians, the... Where is everyone now?"

"It is said that when the Federation started to fall the Vulcans tried to warn the Council, which would not listen; no healthy person would listen when told they were dying. So the Vulcans pulled out of the Federation and returned home. They, like Earth, have passed into legend. I can tell you not much more. A lot of the records were lost or destroyed in the Fall. It is only historians like myself who have spent time and energy looking for details of the past. No-one else is interested in chasing down legends."

"Then there is a chance that Vulcan still exists?"

"But where, and in what state? We have no maps or even any information as to which sector your Federation lay in. And after all this time do you really expect to find the Vulcans you knew?"

"Then what do Chekov and I do? We don't belong here and I doubt if we ever will."

"My robots were scanning the area you appeared in. Maybe they have a clue as to what has happened."

By the following day, Chekov was still unconscious and Scott had found out what had happened. With the aid of some of Tenak's robots, he was able to rig up a device that would, he hoped, get them home. While they worked, Scott told Tenak what life was like on a planet that supposedly didn't exist. When it was time for Scott to try the device, Tenak was sorry to see him leave as he had grown quite fond of him.

"Are you sure this is what you want, my friend? It is sure to be very dangerous."

"Aye, Tenak, but I owe it to the lad in there to try. I will remember you always."

It was the last time that Tenak was to see him. The device worked, and by the time the Enterprise had located the small shuttle Scott had himself slipped into unconsciousness.

When he woke the second time it was to the sound of McCoy's voice. It was the best sound he could ever remember hearing. Though both were released a few days later McCoy kept a close eye on Scott; for some reason he was not the same person as before. Everyone seemed to notice, including Scott himself, who was finding it harder and harder to sleep without dreaming. Finally he paid a visit to Spock.

It was the first time Scott had ever visited Mr Spock in his quarters. Like the rest Spock was curious as to the change in the ship's engineer.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Scott?"

"If I could talk to you for a moment?"

"Concerning your recent trip?"

"Aye. Mr Chekov was unconscious the whole time. He didn't see, but I did. And it's been troubling me ever since."

"Why have you not talked to Dr McCoy or the Captain?"

"'Cause I don't know how they would deal with it. I can't... I don't even know how to explain it to you."

"Would you allow me to mind link with you?"

"I thought you'd never ask."

Spock saw all that Tenak had told Scott and also saw the reason why Scott was having so much trouble with it. Slowly he withdrew from the mind link. He waited for a few minutes then asked.

"Mr Scott, do you expect to live forever?"

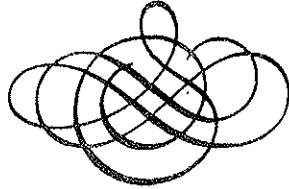
"No, of course not."

"Then in the same context, why do you expect the Federation to live for ever? It is a thing like you and me. It was born from an idea, it grows as we do, and some day it will die as we must die. But in all life, one dies but another is born. This Galactic Empire of Tenak's will be born from the death of the Federation - as one day his Empire will die and another be born. I see no reason to be troubled."

For the first time since his return, Scott felt good.

"Thank you, Spock, for helping me to see it clearly. I guess we Humans do tend to let our emotions get out of control sometimes. Now I'd better get some work done - I seem to have let it slip of late."

No-one ever knew what happened, and Spock never said a word. As far as everyone else was concerned, they were just glad to have the old Scott back.



STARFLEET RAP

Now here's a rhyme for you Star Trek fans,
Who want to travel with this outer space clan.
Well, Kirk's the leader of this crazy crew,
With McCoy, Scott and Uhura too.
Now, Mr Spock you may think we're missing,
But he's in hiding from Nurse Chapel's kissing.
Now, Saavik, Chekov and Sulu too,
Make up the rest of this crazy bridge crew.

CHORUS:

Beam us up Scotty, beam us up quick,
Never mind if it makes Bones sick.
"Beam me up Scotty," the Captain said,
"Her husband's come home and he'll catch us in bed.
Beam me up, Scotty, and make it sharp,
If her husband catches me, I'll be playing a harp."

Well Spock is cool, even Fonzie says that,
And Kirk romances the ladies at the drop of a hat,
Bones can find a cure for every disease,
And Scotty can fix a starship, just as quick as you please.
Uhura 'opens hailing frequencies' to all new life-forms,
While Sulu and Chekov, their duties they are eager to perform.
Saavik is the newest member of this gallant band,
And wonders if Humans she'll ever understand.
With adventures that will make the Trekkers roar,
They'll go where no man has gone before.

CHORUS:

Beam us up, Scotty, beam us up quick,
Never mind if it makes Bones sick.
"Beam me up, Scotty," the Captain said,
"All this week's security men are finally dead.
Beam me up, Scotty, it's driving me insane,
I'm seeing little starships orbiting my brain."

Benjamin T Jones

THE BEST LAID PLANS

Somewhere, in a galaxy far, far away, a plot was hatching...

I'm a beautiful alien lady
With a beautiful alien dream.
I'd like to defeat the Pride of the Fleet,
And capture the Enterprise team.

I escaped from my planet's destruction,
I might be the last of my kind.
Our planet was raided - the Klingons invaded,
And carelessly left me behind.

I'm alone on my dull little spaceship,
I'd like some revenge for my fate.
The Klingons have gone - I'm not taking *them* on,
So Starfleet can witness my hate.

I've made all the right preparations;
I've studied the Captain and crew.
I've accessed a file on their exploits and style,
And I've planned what I'm going to do.

I'll send an Emergency Beacon.
"Please help me! It's urgent!" I'll say.
In case it's ignored, I've a second on board,
"Dilithium crystals, this way!"

They're bound to discover my signal
And hurry to render first aid.
They'll locate the source, and alter their course,
Straight into the trap I have laid.

When that starship appears on my viewscreen
I will know that my plan is succeeding.
I hope they will beam down a small rescue team,
Which Captain James Kirk will be leading.

I am ready to deal with the Captain,
It took ages to get it just right.
My plan is quite cunning, I hope to look stunning
And gain his true love at first sight.

My hair style is quite overwhelming,
And platinum blonde to the root.
My smile is appealing, my outfit revealing -
I aim to look brainless, but cute.

I will wait till the party has landed
Then rush to his side in distress.
He'll forget Starfleet duty - amazed at my beauty,
Amazed at my state of undress.

James Kirk will be blinded by passion,
His normal defences will slip.
He will be so enchanted, he'll take it for granted,
I offer no threat to his ship.

The Vulcan might be more perceptive;
 Advising great caution and care.
 He'll refuse to be charmed, and might notice I'm armed,
 With rayguns concealed in my hair.

I'll pretend to hand over my weapons,
 Then shoot at the crewmen instead.
 (It's usual, I'm told, to ignore blue and gold,
 And to aim at the ones wearing red.)

With the Vulcan and Doctor as hostage,
 And the red-shirts unconscious or dead,
 The helpless James Kirk will assist in my work,
 As I fire at his ship overhead.

I'll disable her warp drive and weapons,
 (Completely surprise Mr. Scott).
 They'll be caught unawares and be thrown from their chairs
 When the Enterprise tilts quite a lot.

I'll disable her shields and computers.
 ("I'm frightened!" Uhura will cry.)
 When I've got their attention, I'll casually mention -
 "Surrender your starship - or die!"

I'll take over the Enterprise starship
 With Kirk as my captive First Mate!
 The ship will be ours, we'll head for the stars,
 Exploring at warp factor eight!

I'm a beautiful alien lady,
 In a beautiful alien jail.
 In case you all wondered, I hopelessly blundered -
 I never imagined I'd fail!

It all went so nicely to start with,
 They swallowed my story completely.
 They altered their course and raced for the source
 And entered my trap very neatly.

They appeared on my viewscreen in orbit,
 I prepared for the party to land;
 I was ready and waiting, looked quite devastating
 And rushed to the Captain, as planned.

The Captain seemed stunned and enchanted;
 The Vulcan, suspicious and quiet.
 I simpered and smiled (the crewmen went wild)
 Then started my well-rehearsed riot.

I convinced Kirk I needed protection
 Then knocked out his crewmen in red.
 His friends were both captured - he seemed quite enraptured -
 My triumph went straight to my head.

It was *then* that my plot went to pieces.
 My action was rash and unwise.
 It did not take long for my plan to go wrong
 When I looked at his deep hazel eyes.

My heart pounded wildly with passion
 Impossible thoughts filled my head.
 I never expected to be thus affected -
 The Captain seduced *me* instead!
 My lifelong beliefs were discarded
 I abandoned the rules I'd lived by.
 He taught me of love, then pointed above
 At the flickering lights in the sky.

He rescued the Vulcan and Doctor
 (Who tended the injured in red
 And saw to their needs with some rattles and beads)
 Then questioned me further (in bed!)

I confessed how I'd tried to deceive him
 To capture his starship and friends.
 His manner grew colder - I cried on his shoulder
 And promised to make full amends.

I offered to stay as his mistress
 I offered great pleasure and love.
 He thanked me but said he had got one already -
 That silver-hulled starship, above.

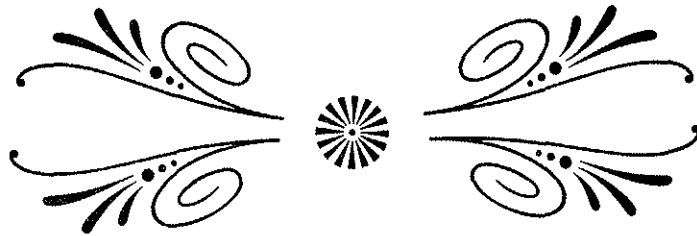
So - I'm stuck in this brig on that starship.
 I'm hoping they'll offer me bail.
 I'm not *too* downhearted, just can't wait to get started
 On my second idea which can't fail...

Much later.....

I'm a beautiful alien lady
 I don't need a beautiful dream.
 I don't want to defeat the Pride of the Fleet,
 I'm part of the Enterprise team!

I offered my talents to Starfleet,
 I'm *really* enjoying my work.
 A pleasant location - the perfect vocation.
 I'm yeoman - to Captain James Kirk!

Pippa L



PERFECTLY LOGICAL

by

Sheila Clark

Spock knelt, stoically enduring - and almost successfully ignoring - the merciless heat of the early afternoon sun, attempting - rather less successfully - to meditate.

An irreverent part of his mind wandered, wondering - not for the first time - why it should be so desirable for first year novices at Gol, the Place of Perfect Logic, to endure so many things that any sensible Vulcan logically avoided.

No intelligent Vulcan of his (pre-Gol) acquaintance ever moved out of the shade, except for the briefest of moments, during the heat of the day. No intelligent Vulcan ever suffered voluntary dehydration. No intelligent Vulcan starved himself (calling it fasting) while performing heavy manual labour such as the Gol novices were expected to undertake in the cool of morning and evening. And although in times of need Vulcans could go without sleep for many days, no intelligent Vulcan deliberately kept himself awake at night when it was not necessary.

Oh, he knew the theory behind such deprivation. A Master of Kolinahr had to show his mastery over his body as well as his baser emotions; had to show his total indifference to physical suffering as well as external stimuli. He had known that before ever he came to Gol, but - like so many novices - he had assumed that he would be broken in gradually; he had not realised that the first months would be so strenuous.

At least, his pride admitted, he had outlasted more than half of that year's intake. Of the fourteen who had entered the novitiate with him, ten had already left, unable - or unwilling - to endure the harsh discipline.

Perhaps next year might be easier? But he knew it would not be. It would not become easier until he could successfully ignore as irrelevant excessive heat or cold, hunger or thirst, lack of sleep, pain... and by the time he could, it would no longer matter.

Not for the first time, he wondered just why he had sought entrance to the Discipline of Kolinahr. His family had tried to dissuade him, but that was to be expected. His father's only son, it had been assumed that he would follow Sarek into a political career.

He had no interest in politics; but it had proved impossible to persuade Sarek of that.

The sciences drew him - always had. In particular, he was fascinated by the relatively new science of astronomy. But while Sarek might have been persuaded to tolerate pure science as a career for his son, he regarded the world of astronomy as fantasy, a 'study' for dreamers, and those who followed it as little better than the tellers of tales, those wandering vagabonds who entertained

the many who were still too easily led from the paths of logic. That some of the most imaginative of these 'vagabonds' were rich mattered little; dreaming and fantasy were beneath the notice or dignity of any member of his House. After all, why study the stars? Nobody could ever reach them.

Was it rebellion, then, that had brought him here? Spock was forced to admit to himself that it was. And that same spirit of rebellion would keep him here, no matter what he suffered. He might fail the Kolinahr - indeed, he admitted to himself that he probably would, for instead of encouraging him to ignore the mysterious blank in his lonely life the Disciplines were actually aggravating it - but he would not leave voluntarily!

He thought back through his life.

So much of it had been influenced by that blank...

He had never felt any rapport with the other children at school, never become friendly with any of them. Yet he seemed to remember a time when he was not alone; a time when he had friends, good friends... friends who would risk their lives for him, for whom he would risk his life.

Ridiculous! A child did not form that kind of relationship with anyone. The Elders in his Family cared for his welfare, but it was illogical for someone to risk life, limb and perhaps even sanity for another. All that might mean was the death of two rather than one, with corresponding loss to Vulcan.

So why was he so drawn to the illogical idea, so sure that it was a good - nay, excellent - basis for a relationship between two or three people?

Insight came suddenly, almost burning out his mind in its intensity.

The Vulcan Way was wrong!

A handful of followers had taken the Teachings of Surak and twisted them into an exaggerated mockery of Surak's Vision. Surak had never envisaged a world without any emotion, where each person was an island, forced by conscientiousness and duty, nothing more, to rear children. It had always been quite clear to him that only duty had persuaded Grandmother T'Pau to bring him up after his father left for Shassar. His father had not wanted him; certainly he had received no affection from either.

Yet...

He had a faint, distant memory of someone who *had* given him affection, someone who had taught him the meaning of the word, but who had not been part of his life for many years. Someone who had given him affection... and then left, vanished without a word. Yet - somehow - Spock knew that whoever it was had not gone voluntarily; some day he would return.

He?

No - *they*! There was one in particular, but there had been more than one.

But when? *When* had he known them?

He had come to Gol almost straight from school; a season spent with his father, vainly trying to understand the devious logic of diplomacy and necessary only because he had not quite attained adult age before he left school, was all that separated him from those unhappy days. He had always been alone. He had not understood any of his schoolmates; none of them had understood him.

At home there had been only Grandmother T'Pau and her involvement in the House's affairs. The three servants had been too busy to involve themselves with him. So how could he have that elusive memory of having been... yes, loved?

No matter. The memory was there, albeit hidden deep. It would serve as a perfect focus for meditation in this basically unstimulating environment.

His realisation that Gol was unstimulating shocked him for a moment, and changed the direction of his thoughts.

Yes... Yes! The Disciplines were all geared to destroying original thought, to keeping everyone at Gol - novices, acolytes, hierophants, Masters and the Grand Master whose lightest word all Vulcan obeyed, on a path that led in a continuous circle from the Teaching of Surak to the Teaching of Surak... Gol interpretation. The Masters lived in stagnation - heretical thought - yet if only one Grand Master could break free of that mould, how he could change Vulcan!

Such a Grand Master would have to move slowly, of course - the customs of ten thousand years could not be overthrown overnight. Indeed, he might never live to see his reforms accepted; but if he chose his acolytes well and taught them well - and chose his successor carefully - in two or three generations Vulcan might be able to break free of its unquestioning acceptance of Surak's values. Of what Gol *said* were Surak's values.

Spock knew his history. Surak had brought peace to a warring planet whose peoples had nearly destroyed themselves... or so it was recorded.

So it was recorded.

Many of his followers - men who were tired of the waste of war - had died while trying to persuade the leaders to talk, to discuss their differences, and Spock honoured their bravery. Eventually Surak himself had gone to mediate, to preach the doctrine of emotional control; he too had died, but in dying had finally persuaded them to talk... and those talks had led to a lasting peace. So it was recorded.

Yes, Surak had been a great man. Spock had no thought of denying that. But - heresy of heresies - had he been quite as great as his reputation, carried down through the millennia?

No. History would have remembered him, of course, but if he had had no followers left to repeat his message of peace and emotional control would Vulcan have turned to logic as the answer to all its problems?

Perhaps it would. Perhaps Surak had simply put into words what many Vulcans of his time must have realised: that continual warfare

was destroying their world. It was the almost incessant warfare of the years immediately before Surak's time that had destroyed so much of Vulcan and turned it into a desert world. Vast forests had been put to the torch to destroy cover that would hide an approaching enemy or shelter defeated fugitives. Salt had been thickly scattered over the rich fields of their defeated enemy by one race who had realised too late - after their enemy starved to death - that it had also made the land for which they had fought unusable for them as well. The Th'aiden Desert was still, after ten thousand years, the most infertile land on Vulcan, despite the attempts of many generations of scientists to find a way of neutralising the salt and restoring fertility.

A bell rang, its steady pealing the first stimulus the novices had been taught. It drew Spock's mind from his thoughts back to the intolerable heat of the Gol Plateau.

He licked dry, cracking lips with an equally dry tongue, and rose from his kneeling position, cautiously stretching joints stiffened by long hours of immobility. Then he headed back towards the Gol caves, where it would at least be cooler, to face six hours of backbreaking work in the gardens where most of the food was grown.

There was a new certainty in his step.

The Masters had been watching the five remaining novices carefully. They noted the change in Spock, and knew that his meditation had given him an insight which they assumed concerned the purpose of life at Gol.

They were not wrong... but neither were they right.

At the end of the first year three of the novices were sent from Gol. Despite all their efforts their meditation had failed to give them any insights, meaningful or otherwise. The two who were left were Spock and T'Ria, an older woman whose husband and children had died in circumstances that Spock had learned were tragic, although he knew no details. Curiosity was not encouraged at Gol. Her need to forget those details was undoubtedly the reason why, at her age, she had survived the rigours of the first year of Training, when thirteen young, fit and initially enthusiastic novices had failed.

Grand Master T'Sai studied the two new acolytes, searching for signs of pride in their achievement, and found none. Satisfied, she said quietly, "You have both done well, but you are a long way yet from achieving Kolinahr.

"Unless this year's novices all fail, you will no longer have to work in the gardens. Instead, you will study gymnastics in the evenings. A Master has control of his body as well as his mind."

Both lowered respectful heads.

Spock soon discovered that the hours spent at exercise were in many ways more arduous than those spent digging, hoeing and weeding.

Slowly, however, he found it becoming easier as his muscles adjusted to the demands made of them. T'Ria, on the other hand, never found the exercises becoming easier; her older body had lost most of its youthful flexibility. She persevered, however, refusing to admit defeat, until the day that she strained her back so badly that despite herself she was unable to stand. After that concessions were made for her age, and she was permitted to exercise to a simpler routine. She knew that this would prevent her from ever advancing beyond the rank of hierophant, but accepted it philosophically as the logical thing to do.

Although he eventually enjoyed the exercise, it was the hours spent in meditation that Spock found becoming more and more rewarding. Memory was connecting; the day came when he remembered the beginning of the blank in his memory. He remembered walking out of the School Doctor's office feeling more alone than he had ever been in his life.

Something had happened there. Something had been taken from his mind!

The realisation gave him hope and even more incentive to continue. If he attained full mastery of his thoughts, his mind, he would surely remember what it was the Doctor had made him forget. Although he could guess. The Doctor had surely made him forget whoever it was who had given him the affection he still craved.

Time passed. Spock finally attained Kolinahr and became a hierophant, and only he knew that it was a sham. Yes, he had learned total control... and that control hid both his search for a lost memory and his wish to change Vulcan so that the day would come when no other Vulcan child would search in vain for a love that was denied him because it was totally illogical.

Over the years, he advanced in rank. He became a Master, in charge of testing novices and acolytes. Slowly he built up a small following of those acolytes who sought Kolinahr to escape from their need for something that was missing in their lives, something that they could not name, but that Spock recognised because it was also missing from his own life.

The only thing that surprised him was that there were so many of them.

After a few years Spock was transferred to other duties; he was put in charge of the library. This did not take him from close association with the acolytes, for one of their duties was the careful writing out of anything important that was happening on Vulcan; Spock merely had to supervise, a task that predominantly consisted of boredom - or would have done if he had had less control of his thoughts. He took advantage of his position to search the oldest records, finding texts so old that their writing was faded, and suggested to Grand Master T'Lar that these ancient records should be copied.

"It is not logical that the words of Surak and his immediate followers be lost. It would seem sensible to copy the oldest texts while they can still be read."

T'Lar agreed, a faint gleam in her eyes suggesting to Spock that she, too, might have wondered if Surak's original teaching had been misinterpreted.

It was not an easy task; the texts were written in Old Vulcan, and while the words were mostly familiar the style of lettering was almost completely different from the alphabet the acolytes were used to. After consultation with T'Lar Spock had decided that the texts should be copied twice, once in the original lettering and once in modern lettering to make them easier to read.

He selected his followers for the task, knowing that if any of them found anything to hint that Surak had been misinterpreted, it would be brought to his notice immediately. The only thing he had to worry about was whether, then, to report it to T'Lar.

Success came in the form of an ancient, almost totally illegible document. The acolyte who unrolled it to start work on it brought it to Spock apologetically.

"Your forgiveness, Master, but I do not think this one can be copied."

Spock examined it carefully. "It will certainly be most difficult, Sharla. Leave it with me. I will see what I can do with it."

"Yes, Master."

Spock took it to his desk, and examined it again. Unlike most of the other documents they had handled, this did not seem to be a straightforward report; rather, it seemed to be a letter.

He began by writing out the letters and words he could read, putting in a faint line for those he could not, and quite soon established - to his own satisfaction at least - that this was a letter written by Surak to some of his followers.

He sat staring at what he had deciphered for a long time. One phrase that was quite distinct was 'control of greed'.

He was aware of an almost-forgotten emotion - satisfaction. He could hardly wait to begin trying to decipher all the document, but the bell rang and habit led him to roll up both the document and his copy when what he longed to do was remain at his desk. But he knew that he must not show such impatience in front of the acolytes, his followers though they were. It would be different if he was nearly finished with the copy - it would be logical, then, to work on to finish it.

It took him months of painstaking work before he managed to decipher approximately 80% of the document. The remainder seemed to be lost beyond retrieval.

The 80%, however, was enough to confirm what he had suspected; it was indeed a letter from Surak to his followers, and although Surak was advocating control of emotion, it was the negative emotions he was criticising - at least in the part that could be deciphered.

Spock studied the original yet again, trying to make sense out

of the few faint marks that still showed. That 20% would be enough to let the most hidebound of Gol Masters insist that how did anyone know it did not criticise the positive emotions too. He must try to make sense out of a little more of it!

He frowned slightly. He really ought to take this to T'Lar soon. If only he could be sure how she would react! There was, however, one thing he could do as insurance in case she reacted adversely; he carefully made another copy of what he had deciphered and put it among the acolyte-copied material, reasoning that the best place to hide something like this was in full view. Then he took the original and his copy to T'Lar.

She studied both carefully, then looked up at him. "You are quite certain of your reading of this?"

"Yes, T'Lar. Of course, if the missing segments could also be read it would be more meaningful, but as it stands..." He allowed his voice to trail off. She could interpret his statement either way.

She nodded and looked at him almost quizzically. "You believe Surak did not recommend the suppression of all emotion."

"That is how I read his letter," he admitted.

"I agree. I have long thought that Surak's teaching may have been exaggerated by some of the more fanatical of his followers. This would seem to confirm my thoughts."

"It would be more readily accepted if all of the letter could be read," Spock commented. "I will endeavour to decipher the rest of it."

"You are correct," she said. "I do not think, however, that you will manage."

"I agree," he admitted. "But I must try. It is wrong for a world to live a lie - and if we continue to follow misinterpreted teaching, we are living a lie."

T'Lar named Spock her successor shortly after, and leaving the acolytes to continue copying the old records under the guidance of a newly appointed Master who had shown an interest in the work, Spock began to work with her. He took Surak's letter with him and continued to work at it in his free hours, few though these were.

They soon became fewer. Barely a month after his promotion T'Lar died, and Spock found himself, without adequate training, in the position of Grand Master.

Now it was time to begin preaching heresy.

He began slowly, by showing his transcript of Surak's letter to his acolytes and to those of the hierophants and Masters that he thought could accept the revelation. The new novices, too, were to be judged by a different set of values. People who came to seek a judgement from the Grand Master - usually against an erring son or daughter - sometimes found that that judgement was not what they had

expected. Spock soon came to be known as a Grand Master who permitted a person's choice to affect his decision, rather than giving a cold judgement based only on external facts. He was criticised by the elderly; but the young thought well of him.

The houses that dropped out of the sky taught many Vulcans who thought they had forgotten emotion the meaning of fear. The three houses landed in an open area and did nothing. At last, one or two of the braver or more resilient souls ventured out of hiding and approached slowly.

A door slid open in one of the houses and a man came out. He looked almost Vulcan, apart from the near-immodest clothes he wore. His legs were clad in two tubes of cloth, black as a novice's robes, that reached from ankle to groin, where they joined to make one tube. His robe was tight-fitting and reached only to his waist; instead of being decently white it was close to the yellow of mourning. And his ears had round tips.

Could he be some kind of priest?

He raised one hand, palm forward. "We come in peace."

The boldest Vulcan stepped hesitantly forward. "Who are you? Are you a follower of Surak?"

"We come from far away; our leaders have sent us to talk to you. We need to speak to someone in authority."

The Vulcans muttered together, then -

"You must travel to Gol, where you can speak to the Grand Master. He speaks for Vulcan."

There was a strange look on the visitor's face, but he said only, "How do we get to Gol?"

The Vulcan pointed. "It is that way - sixteen days' travel."

The visitor smiled. "I think we will get there a little quicker than that. How will we know it when we get there?"

The Vulcans conferred again. Finally the spokesman said, "There is a great plateau, and at one side it rises into a mountain. The Masters live in caves in the mountain, but they grow crops on the plateau. If you go there in your... house... you will recognise it by the crops. All around it is desert."

The visitor said something incomprehensible, turned and disappeared back into his house. A few moments later the three houses rose from the ground and headed off in the indicated direction. Seconds later they were out of sight.

Spock was checking the work of his newest copyists when the afternoon bell rang. He nodded his satisfaction with the work, and turned to leave. He was halfway to the kitchens when one of the novices came running - actually *running* - up the carved steps of the cave.

"Grand Master! Grand Master!"

"Control yourself, S'Par," Spock said firmly. A rebel he might be at heart, but certain principles had to be maintained.

S'Par stopped dead, lowered his head and took two deep breaths. "I ask forgiveness, Grand Master. Sir, there are strangers at Gol. They arrived in three flying houses and ask to speak with the Grand Master."

Flying houses? Spock stiffened. Why did that description sound somehow familiar?

"I will come."

He turned, strode down the stair and out of the cave. On the plateau below he saw the three strange shapes, and felt he should know what they were. He looked down the main stairway. At the bottom was a small group of strangers, easily recognised by the colours they were wearing and the unusual clothes. Three wore yellow; two wore blue; the rest wore red. He moved steadily down the steps, followed by several acolytes, hierophants and Masters - not all the control of Kolinahr could prevent their curiosity about these strangers.

Spock stopped when he reached the strangers, and looked at them. His attention was drawn to one of the men wearing yellow - a man with an oddly expectant look.

"Jim," he said softly. "Your name is Jim."

"Yes, Spock. Yes!"

Behind him, Spock heard a soft murmur of surprise, but he ignored it. "I did not want to leave, but I had no choice. Someone took you from my mind."

The stranger called Jim nodded. "I know. I have been lonely without you, Spock... but I knew that one day we would meet in reality, not just in our dreams. When I learned that this world is called *Vulcan*... But I dared not hope we might meet so soon. How much do you remember?"

"Very little." He looked searchingly at the... the Human. "You must also have been a child."

"Yes. A child with space in my blood. But space was not out of my reach." He looked round. "You have no technology here, do you?"

The word did not translate, but somehow Spock knew what was meant. It meant the ability to build houses that flew... no, *ships* - he remembered the word from his long-forgotten dreams. "Not as you do. If we want to travel, we usually walk. Our tools are very simple, made of stone or wood. My people cannot begin to imagine..." He indicated the three *ships*.

A world reverted to a stone age level of culture. All the probes had indicated so, of course, although some of the crew hadn't believed it possible that in a whole world, especially one where living was as hard as here, nobody had come up with some kind of technology. Jim Kirk shook his head, wondering how his dreams could include a child of this race. Yet it was no stranger than the

simple fact that McCoy had been in his dreams too. He beckoned the Doctor forward.

"Do you remember Dr. McCoy?"

Spock studied the older face for a moment. "Bones," he said.

"Yes, Spock."

"Did you dream too?"

"Yes, sometimes." He nodded to his leader. "But I reckon it was Jim's dreams that reached both of us."

Another memory surfaced. "You come from a cooler world than this. Come - you will be more comfortable in the cave. Eat with us."

"We'll be glad to," Jim said happily.

As they climbed the steps, Spock asked, "What brings you here?"

"Do you remember the Klingons?"

Spock climbed several steps before he answered. "I think so. They were a ruthless enemy, were they not?"

"That's right. We've been watching Vulcan for a while, but it never occurred to me that this was Spock's... your... world. I was sure that you must have come from a world that, like mine, had spaceflight. Anyway, we got word that the Klingons are interested in this world, and my superiors decided that we should offer you help to resist them."

"You will remember that my race are pacifists."

"All the more reason why we should defend you. But we probably won't have to fight. If the Klingons know that Vulcan is part of the Federation - or at least allied to it - I think they'll decide it's too big a mouthful and leave you alone."

Spock considered that as he led them to the top table where normally only the Grand Master and the Grand Master Elect sat, gesturing for novices to bring stools. "You could be right. But what would the Klingons want with Vulcan? Our world is poor, impoverished by the wars of ten thousand years ago. So much was destroyed then!"

"Did your people never discover metal?" Jim asked as he sat.

"Long, long ago... but there was very little. Too little to be used for common things. A few of the old Families have metal brooches, passed down from mother to daughter, so old the catches are worn, so valuable they are never worn in case they are lost. For a Family to own such a thing is the proof of its antiquity." Spock motioned the waiting novice to serve his visitors first.

"Mmm. What about rock crystal? Is there much of that?" Kirk took a mouthful of steaming vegetables, chewed and swallowed appreciatively. "This is excellent."

"It is a matter of discipline that the food at Gol be well prepared. Crystal? In some areas. But it is valueless, too

brittle to be worked into knives although its split edges are sharp. Some of the small pieces are used as jewellery by the women."

"Spock, I'll make a small bet that some of that crystal, maybe all of it, is dilithium. Remember? We use it to power our ships?"

"So we would have something of value to trade with the Federation in return for membership?"

"You would indeed."

Spock ate in silence for some moments, appreciating Jim's polite silence as he waited for a reply.

"I favour joining the Federation, though there are those, especially here at Gol, who will not, who would prefer to die in support of the old ways, fossilising for ten thousand years. But I think it is time for change."

"Grand Master!" An elderly Vulcan seated at the top of one of the other tables rose.

"You may speak, Stolor."

"With respect, you are betraying all that Surak taught us!"

"I am sure that Surak - our Teacher for those ten thousand years - " he explained in an aside for the benefit of the Humans, "would have agreed with me. He did not teach us to refuse a challenge, Stolor. He taught us to control our destructive emotions. Note I say 'destructive'. Some time ago we discovered in the library an ancient document which we believe is a letter written by Surak himself. He talks of controlling greed and hatred; nowhere in it does he talk of controlling love. He talks of settling dispute by discussion, so that tribes can get to know each other; nowhere does he say that a strange tribe is automatically an enemy that must not be trusted. I say the time has come for change; for reaching out and learning new things. These people - " he indicated the Humans beside him - "can help us to learn." He rose and gazed over the ranks of novices, acolytes, hierophants and Masters. "If you disagree, that is your right, and you may leave here and set up a new sacerdocy. Meanwhile, I suggest that no-one acts hastily; if you are doubtful, spend the night in meditation. But also consider this: we have been warned of the possible approach of a race who will not permit us to make our own decisions, who will either kill or enslave us, or force us to fight to defend ourselves. Do you want either of these options? If not - how much better, then, to be part of a group so large that we are safe from attack." He looked round once more. "I will ask for your decision in the morning."

He turned to the Humans. "Would you care to remain here this night? I cannot offer you much comfort - here at Gol we pride ourselves on our mastery of our minds and bodies - but..."

Jim smiled. He glanced at the Doctor, who made a face. "I have to get back tonight - I need to be available in case Harris has a relapse."

"M'Benga's reliable."

"Yes - but I think you and Spock have a lot to talk about."

Jim looked at the Vulcan. "He's right, Spock. We do have a

lot to talk about. All those years... I'll be glad to remain, Spock. I don't think there's any need for my men to stay, though."

The vote went in favour of listening to the Humans. Only a few were opposed, but when they realised how few of them there were, they accepted the will of the majority.

"Good," Jim said later, when he and Spock were once again closeted together, officially discussing terms for a preliminary treaty. "I'm sure that Vulcan has a lot to offer the Federation - quite apart from dilithium."

"Yes... but are we likely to meet again, Jim? I cannot leave Vulcan - not now, not when we are in the middle of such an upheaval. I have, after all, just turned ten thousand years of custom upside down. It is my duty to help steady everything again. And you - you are a Starship Captain..."

"A Starship Captain who is close to the end of the current five-year mission," Jim replied, "and is unlikely to be given another. I've already done twenty years in space, and that tends to be regarded as the maximum anyone is asked to serve off-planet, even though they want to. Rumour has it that I'm to be offered promotion to Admiral. I don't want it, but if I refuse they'll probably assign me to a Starbase. It's a different kind of desk duty, but it's still a desk. But I could volunteer to act as Starfleet representative here. They'll almost certainly go for that, since I'm responsible for contacting Vulcan in the first place. We needn't tell them we already knew each other - that First Contact was actually made thirty-two years ago."

"They would not believe it if we did."

"Bones will come with me," Jim added. "The Humans on Vulcan will certainly need a Doctor. We won't be serving on a ship, the way we did in our dreams, but we will be working together."

Spock nodded. "It should be... most rewarding," he said formally. But inside, he was singing.

He would never be alone again. He had, against all logic, found the long-lost friends of his childhood, and he would not lose them again. For, of course, when you were an adult and ruler of a world, there was nobody to interfere with your friendship. And friendship - and love - were, thanks to that long-forgotten letter of Surak's, now known to be perfectly logical.

